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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ST. OLAVES," "JANITA'S CROSS," "ALEC'S BRIDE,"

&c., &c., &c.

Eliza (Tabor) Stephenson.

"'Tis only noble to be good."

NEW YORK:
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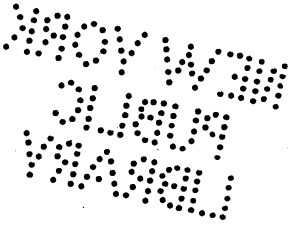

To my Godchild,

Hilda.

JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

It was a very old house, fronting the village church, having but a grassy foot-road between its stone gate-way and those church-yard yew-trees upon whose black-cowled heads the snows of more than four centuries had fallen.

So near the village church, that at early morning-time the dormer-window of the chamber where for generations past the heirs of Lyneton Abbots had drawn their first breath, cast its shadows upon the east front of the church, quite into the chancel where those same heirs of Lyneton Abbots lay buried, with folded hands and fast-shut eyelids, beneath canopies of carved stone. And toward evening, when the sun was low, that east front in its turn darkened the dormer-window of the old house; so that life and death, the cradle and the grave, seemed ever meeting and mingling there.

A mouldering, time-worn mansion, round whose high-pitched gables the untrimmed ivy wove many a fantastic wreath and spray, over whose gray stone facings the lichens crept in stains of russet brown, brightening into gold when the sunlight, slanting down through the branches of a great elm-tree at the corner of the house, found room to strike upon them. And the swallows built their nests year by year under the overhanging eaves, and the robins chirped their merry song among the clasping ivy-branches, and for seven successive springs a pair of impudent little sparrows had hatched, fed, and brought their family to maturity in the head-gear of Siward, the old Abbot, whose effigy, very crumbling now, and dilapidated, stood within a niche over the great entrance.

Evidently it was a place whose best days were gone. The future would never give back what the past had taken away, when it gnawed down the fair carved-work of that oriel-window at the south end, and crumbled, inch by inch, the massive balustrades which once formed such a stately finish to the gravelled terrace in the front of the house. There would be no bringing back now of the early pride and splendor of the home, no re-awakening of the old days, when lords in slashed doublets and silken hose, and ladies in rustling attire, with fans and ruffs and farthingales, had stepped about on that terrace, or stood for loving talk in the shadow of the oriel-window; or filled with mirth, and song, and laughter, those dull wainscoted rooms, where now, from morning to night, scarce a footstep came to wake their slumbering echoes.

For there was an unkept, deserted air about the place. Not a comfortless air, though. The old house of Lyneton Abbots was a home still, and the gentle charities of home, if not its sweetest and tenderest, found room to nestle there, like late flowers among the withered leaves of autumn-time, more beautiful for the stillness and decay which surrounded them. But the fortunes of its owners had not kept pace with their needs. The rent-roll of the Manor House of Lyneton Abbots, once so rich and crowded, had slowly dwindled down, as one by one the broad acres which belonged to it had been alienated to pay debts of honor, or portion younger sons, or give her dowry to some fair bride. Until now that rent-roll scarce yielded enough to keep the home together, and left nothing over for the old state and hospitality which used to be dispensed there with such lordly pride.

Even the garden had that forlorn, uncultivated picturesqueness about it which comes with season after season of neglect; a picturesqueness which would be so far beyond the careful beauty of art, if it did not tell its own sad story of failing fortune and decaying life. For years and years the place had been left to itself. Along the buttressed stone wall, from whose widening crevices great tufts of house-leek burst forth, and patches of golden moss, the grape-vines clambered, holding on as best they could to the gnarled remains of apricot and peach-trees, weighed down here and there with clusters of fruit, which the warm September sunshine was just touching into purple. And where there was room for them to win a little of that sunshine, great branches of hops struggled upward, and hung their pale green tassels side by side with blue convolvulus bells, and crimson fuchsias which grew nowhere so richly as in the old garden of Lyneton Abbots Manor House.

In front of the oriel-window, almost overtopped by the rank grass, which for years no mower's scythe had kept down, was a dial of Queen Elizabeth's time, whose brazen gnomon counted off the hours on a plate traced over with cabalistic figures and signs of the zodiac, all of them well-nigh rubbed out by centuries of damp and mildew, or only to be deciphered in delicate tracery-work of moss which Time had written over the

old graver's handicraft. And further away down the garden, among rose and lavender bushes and great clumps of Portugal laurel, was a fountain urn, held by stone dolphins, out of whose three gaping mouths as many rills of crystal water ought to have trickled into great conch-shells beneath. But none ever did trickle out now, for the pipes which fed the old fountain had long ago got choked up, and only after some heavy summer shower did a few scant drops ooze forth and fall with lazy, leisurely splash among the flag-stems and lily-leaves. Those three old stone dolphins, like the Lyneton Abbots people, had seen their most prosperous days.

Past this weedy, moss-choked fountain, the winding path stretched along, between high fantastically-cut box-tree borders, to a gate-way surmounted by two stone griffins, with wide-open defiant jaws, and talons thrust out as though in act to tear to pieces any rash intruder that should dare to trespass, uninvited, across the portals of the ancient house. And thence it opened into the grassy foot-road which led to St. Hilda's Church, where so many noble knights and ladies, all of them bearing the Lyneton name, and once owning all the Lyneton pride and beauty, lay still enough now, their day's work done, beneath the chancel stones.

The village of Lyneton Abbots, so called from the homestead around which it lay, was just such a pleasant spot as the hand of busy progress has yet left in many a nook and corner of old England. It had all the legitimate appendages of a primitive village. There was a green in the midst of it, skirted with thatched cottages, and planted with magnificent old chestnut-trees, under whose shelter the old men used to sit in summer afternoons, talking over rustic gossip with the women whose day's work was done. There was also a May-pole, the centre of great merry-making during the yearly feast; and near to it, as though placed there to check the too roisterous outbursts of such merry-making, was a pair of stocks; quite useless, however, now, as instruments of punishment, but yielding immense store of gratification to sundry little bare-footed children, who performed various gymnastic feats thereupon, greatly to the delight of such juvenile spectators as had neither marbles nor tops at their disposal for the employment of leisure time. There was a little brook, too, chattering along over stones and gravel right through the middle of the village, an unfailing source of amusement to the more meditative lads, who fished in it for minnows, and sometimes, but at very rare intervals, caught them. And striking out from the place in all directions were narrow winding lanes beneath whose hawthorn hedges, so rich in spring-time with stores of snowy blossom, the village youths and maidens used to saunter, to hear the nightingales, they said, though truly it was a sweeter music than any the nightingales could give which made those May evenings seem so short.

From St. Hilda's Church a pleasant road crept along past corn-fields and pasture-lands to the neighboring town of Oresbridge, two miles away; the great, busy, manufacturing town, where a hundred and fifty thousand human souls toiled and labored and struggled, some upward to the shining gates of heaven, some quite elsewhither.

Eastward from Oresbridge was the iron and coal district, which brought yearly to the town so vast a revenue of wealth and misery, planting its outskirts with lordly villas and almost palace-like mansions; pouring into the coffers of its merchants and manufacturers uncounted thousands of gold and silver; sweeping up, too, into its lanes and alleys a festering mass of vice and sin and wretchedness, and thronging its gin-shops with haggard, pale-faced, stooping-shouldered men, whose growth had been checked when they were children by long labor in the mines. Sauntering through Lyneton Abbots after night-fall, you might see the hot breath of a hundred furnaces lighting up the eastern sky as with the glow of some tremendous conflagration. And when all was still round the old homestead—when the hum of village life had hushed itself away—when the last note of thrush or blackbird had ceased from the tree-tops, and the little children were sleeping peacefully in their cradles, rocked with a mother's gentle lullaby, you might stand in that grassy foot-road between St. Hilda's Church and the griffin-guarded gate-way, and hear far off the many voices of the great town, the tramp of its myriad feet, the roar of its furnaces, the thunder of its hammers, the wail of its sadness, and the tumult of its mirth, all softened down into a murmur as of distant waves breaking and rolling back again into the wide ocean—a murmur which even the flutter of a bird's wing in the leaves overhead, or the sighing of wind might overpower, so dim was it and indistinct, though telling of so much labor and sorrow.

But sometimes the great sea of life in that toiling town of Oresbridge overflowed, and touched with its outward ripple the quiet village which lay within high-water mark of its tide. On Saturdays, when the mills ceased work at midday, when the din and tumult of machinery had leave to rest for a few hours, and those huge furnaces no longer rolled out their tongues of lurid flame into the smoky air, clusters of sharp-faced, keen-eyed artificers might be seen strolling beneath the old trees upon the village green, or stunted, brawny-armed men, whose skins were darkened with heat from the smelting furnaces, or miners lean and smutched, or mechanics whose shabby clothes and hunger-sharpened eyes told of hard work and scant wages. And these men, dwellers in Oresbridge garrets and cellars, looked wistfully at the sunlight trickling down through the white-blossomed chestnut-trees; and they would stand by the church-yard gate with folded arms, hearing the lark carol his song of joy aloft toward the blue sky, which no smoke of furnace or tall chimney ever darkened; until night came, and they must needs go back to the great town, and the toil, and the strife, and

the suffering of the life appointed to them therein.

Excepting these weekly raids of loose hands from Oresbridge, who, besides loitering under white-blossomed chestnut-trees at the churchyard gate, also thronged the ale-houses and disturbed the quiet of the village green with an occasional drunken brawl, Lyneton Abbots was an orderly, well-conducted place. Its hard-handed laborers, well paid for the most part, and lightly worked, had the stolid, contented look of men for whom the days came and went with little care or anxiety. They were men whose spirits dwelt comfortably prisoned within the narrow limits of their daily lives. Having food and clothing, they were, in a sense surely quite otherwise than the Apostle Paul's, therewith content. Its women toiled cheerfully on by cottage firesides, getting ready their husbands' dinners, mending their husbands' clothes, tending the little children who were by and by to live a life as simple and narrow as their own. Its boys and girls romped on the village green, and thumped their spelling-books at the village school, and heard sermons preached at the village church, and learned their duty to God and their neighbor out of the Shorter Catechism. Then year by year beheld them grow up into youths and maidens, until that happy time came when they began to saunter through hawthorn lanes, beneath shelter of summer twilight, telling to each other the old, old story, which none will ever weary to repeat, none ever weary to hear; which, whether told amid the din and tumult of the million-peopled [illegible], through smoke of furnace and clang of [illegible]y-handed labor, or listened to in the quiet of secluded village lanes, with not a sound to disturb it but rustle of leaves and song of birds, is still the one true story of the human heart, its best and sweetest and brightest.

And what of life in the old house by the church-yard? The old house whose shadow fell at morn upon St. Hilda's Church window, and which at night was darkened by that chancel window again. The old house under whose eaves swallows built and twittered, around whose quaintly-carved dormer-windows the ivy crept with many an untrimmed wreath and spray. What of life in the old house at Lyneton Abbots?

CHAPTER II.

It was not so dreary as might have been expected from its external surroundings. Nay, as the world goes, it might have been called a happy life. Because if it lacked much outward show and brilliance, it was also free from that daily presence of care and sorrow, that grinding, hidden anxiety which wears the spring out of many a life long before its time.

Whatever dark or clinging memories the old house at Lyneton Abbots might have gathered in time past within the shadow of its oaken-panelled chambers, none such belonged to the people who dwelt in them now. The deepest shadow which lay upon their lives was that which, sooner or later, must rest upon all, the tender, chastened thought of those who had been and were not.

Graham Lyneton, the present owner of the estate, had been twice married, but both his wives slept with the rest of the Lyneton race, in the chancel of St. Hilda's Church. Some of the old people of the village still remembered the first Mrs. Lyneton, who had been dead now for nearly twenty years. She was a lady of majestic and noble presence, Mr. Lyneton's own cousin, who had not needed to change her name in taking his. Tall, fair, gracious, yet very proud, like all the Lyneton people; the last of a long line, who had given to England some of its bravest knights, and on whose escutcheon no blot rested of ignoble alliance or unworthy deed. They remembered her lustrous beauty, the calm stateliness of her ways; with what a noble courtesy she used to bear herself among them; how with kindly, queen-like grace she would linger at their cottage doors to ask after some aged or sickly one, quietly, as beseemed one of such gentle birth, yet ever with a sort of cold reserve which held them back from telling her of their little troubles, or seeking her advice in any of those common sorrows in which a woman claims, as if by instinct, every other woman's sympathy, and receives it too.

But they looked up to her with lowly reverence, as one quite apart from themselves; and they were very proud of her for her beauty. And when Sunday after Sunday, leaning on her husband's arm, she came out of church, and went down that grassy path under the yew-trees, that path which was never used by any but the Manor House people, they would gaze after her with longing, lingering looks, until her tall figure was quite out of sight behind the gate-way. For in all the country round there was none so fair and noble, none who carried herself so grandly, or wore a smile so gracious as the Lady of Lyneton Abbots.

They had no children. It might be that which made her look sad sometimes, which brought almost a cramp of pain into her pale face as she crossed the village green, where the lads and lasses were gamboling so merrily; or loitered at the threshold of some humble cottage, to watch the happy mother within playing with her babe, the little bright-eyed babe, who had just learned to laugh and crow, and give back smile for smile.

Perhaps the beautiful lady of Lyneton would have parted with all the bright jewels that shone upon her fair bosom, could she have laid a child of her own there; and perhaps its lord would have given up half his patrimony for the tread of little footsteps through those lonely halls of his, or the sound of baby voices through those grand old wainscoted rooms where now so many silent hours were passed.

Whatever it might be, however, that brought

the look of pain and longing into Mrs. Lyneton's face, she did not wear that look long. One chilly autumn season, when dull November fogs were rotting the chestnut-leaves upon the green, and the Lyneton hills scarce put off from morn to night their veil of gray mist, and the old elms in the Manor House garden showed but a network of black branches upon the darkening sky, her footstep began to be missed from the cottage doors, and her low, quiet voice from the Church prayers in which for the last three years the people had heard it mingle.

Then there was much passing of carriages up and down that grassy lane between the church and the old house, much looking up to one curtained window, where all night long, for many a week, a light was dimly burning, while patient watchers kept their vigil; and much anxious questioning among the village people, who loved the lady of Lyneton Abbots very much, for all she was so stately and proud. Questions which needed not long to be repeated, for before the February snow-drops began to look out in the church-yard, the pestilential fever, which, bred in the dens and cellars of Oresbridge, crept away through damp and mist to the outlying villages, had done its work. Mr. Lyneton was left a widower. A grand funeral train swept across under the yew-trees to St. Hilda's Church. A black hatchment was reared up in front of Abbot Siward's niche, above the door-way of Lyneton Abbots Manor House, and there was a sound of mourning, not loud, but deep, in that lonely, childless home.

Of course the village gossips began to talk. People always will when death takes one whose life has not been of the happiest or the brightest. Those who thought they knew as much about the Manor House family as most, said, with many a shake of the head and much sighing and regret, that although that quiet face of hers betrayed few secrets, yet perhaps it might be quite other than November fogs or murky fever-taint from the great town of Oresbridge which had dimmed the light in Mrs. Lyneton's once so bright eyes, and worn the dear life out of her, and laid her, all too soon, side by side with the ancient knights and dames of high degree who slept so peacefully under their carved canopies and marble head-stones, round about the Manor House pew. If great folks carried their troubles on their brows, the village gossips said, little folks would not pine so much for noble name and high descent, and the privilege of dwelling in splendid old family mansions, and being buried, when their turn came, beneath massive sculptured urns or mural tablets, which told forth such a grand array of estates and titles.

That might be only village gossip. Most likely it was nothing more. For Graham Lyneton mourned his dead wife most truly. He did not show his grief, as some men do, by many tears and lamentations, much praising of the departed, much speaking of her virtues before friends and acquaintances, otherwise people might have given him credit for more feeling. It was never the way of the Lynetons to make much outward show over any grief of theirs. What was given them to suffer they suffered very quietly. None of those knights and ladies in Lyneton Abbots church had been much wept over in public, much praised there, though their memories had been faithfully and lovingly kept through years of lonely, unspoken grief.

Mr. Lyneton manifested his sense of loss chiefly by withdrawing from society, which, as he had never mingled very freely in it, was not so much noticed as a great parade of affliction would have been. He dropped, too, one after another, the out-door sports which he used to love so well. He scarcely ever went into company—very rarely received any at his own house. He lived almost entirely among his books and papers, now and then riding out over the moors with his aunt, Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, or strolling with his little sister Gwendoline through the woods which belonged to the estate.

There was nearly twenty years difference between Graham Lyneton and his sister Gwendoline. He was the eldest, she the youngest of the family. The sons and daughters who had been born between them were all dead, buried with the rest of the Lyneton people in St. Hilda's Church. When, at five-and-twenty, Graham, having just succeeded to the paternal estate, married his cousin, and brought her to the old house by the church-yard, Gwendoline was a sprightly child of six years old, fair and graceful, but with a certain lofty pride about her, even then, which made her brother call her in sport, "Princess Gwendoline."

After Graham's marriage, the dowager Mrs. Lyneton took her little daughter, and went to reside in London with her sister-in-law, Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, a grand, stately spinster, who lived in a house as grand and stately as herself, in one of the squares at the West End, and who proposed this arrangement as suitable for keeping up the family dignity, the widow's jointure being scarcely sufficient to maintain herself and her daughter in such style as befitted the bearers of so noble a name.

It was not for long, however, that such style needed to be kept up. The Lynetons were never a long-lived race. Gwendoline's mother died in London only a year after Graham's marriage, leaving the little girl to the guardianship of Aunt Hildegarde, who fulfilled her trust with severe conscientiousness, not unmixed with affection. She was a real Lyneton, grave, reserved, dignified, having a steadfast love of kin, and a deep-rooted pride in the honor of the Lyneton family. This last principle she instilled into little Gwendoline so thoroughly, that, for the very sake of the name she bore, the child would have scorned to do a mean thing, or cherish a mean thought. Not one of the Alicias, or Alithas, or Berengarias who lay under their stone canopies in St. Hilda's Church, had borne their name more proudly, or cared more to keep it pure and spotless, than this little Gwendoline, the youngest of the line.

After Graham's wife died, Aunt Hildegarde and her niece came down to the old home at Lyneton Abbots, and lived a very secluded life with him there, the stately spinster devoting herself, as heretofore, to the education of the young girl; training her in such old-fashioned accomplishments as she had been taught in her own youth; but, above all, forming her into the Lyneton mould of quietness and self-control. It was always the glory of the Lynetons to be self-controlled, to speak no word, or but few, to the herd of common people without, of the hopes, joys and fears that stirred within them. Whether grief came to them or gladness, they took it alike quietly, and held it to themselves alone.

This quiet life lasted for two years. Then the family chanced to spend a September in Scotland. The doctors said Mr. Lyneton must have change of air, and change of scene, and change of society. And change he certainly did have, even to an extent which they had never ventured to recommend. For after that visit to the Highlands, the lord of the manor shook off his solitary ways and began to go out a little more into society. The old house by the church-yard was freshened up, the vines nailed to the mouldering wall, the ivy trimmed, the terrace-walk repaired and beautified, Abbot Siward's niche rechiselled, the balustrades spoiled of their clinging moss and lichen, the place put into thorough order and neatness; and while the gossips of the village were still wondering what all these changes could portend, Mr. Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots brought home a new wife.

CHAPTER III.

She was a slight, delicate woman, but bright and cheery, as unlike the first Mrs. Lyneton as one woman could be to another. A gentle little creature, with sunny blue eyes, and a winning smile, and a sweet Scottish accent, and pretty unassuming ways, more like those of a girl than of a full-grown married woman; ways, indeed, which seemed scarcely suitable to the mistress of the grand old homestead, though doubtless very pleasing to Mr. Lyneton. For if, as men often do when they marry a second time, he had sought a complete contrast to his former wife, he had certainly met with it in the present instance. Though how, when the first flush of bridal excitement had passed away, such a lady would suit him, the grave, austere, reserved master of Lyneton Abbots, the village gossips would not take upon themselves to say. Time would show.

Of course every one expected that when Miss Hildegarde Lyneton went back to the stately old mansion at the West End, as she did after her nephew's second marriage, she would have taken Gwendoline with her. Gwendoline was nearly eleven years old now, ready for such masters as a second-rate place like Oresbridge could *not supply*. Very high-spirited, too, and with all the Lyneton will and determination about her; a serious undertaking, a *very* serious undertaking, for an amiable little creature like the second Mrs. Lyneton, who had evidently not the slightest notion of managing or controlling any one, except by the power of love, which was a very useless power, unless joined with a due amount of energy and decision. Doubtless Miss Hildegarde Lyneton would make a home for her niece in London, and superintend her education, and secure good masters for her, and, when the time came, introduce her into the best society, and arrange a splendid match for her with some young nobleman—her birth and beauty, if not her fortune, would qualify her for any thing of that kind—and so her brother's marriage, instead of being any loss to her, so far as a comfortable home was concerned, would turn out to be a blessing in disguise.

But, to the utter astonishment of the upper-class village people, Gwendoline Lyneton remained with her brother after his second marriage. Whether Miss Hildegarde, not approving of her nephew's choice, had withdrawn from her former intimate connection with the family, or whether Mr. Lyneton thought that his young sister, of whom he was of course the legal guardian, would be better for a change of influence, nobody ever found out; but certain it was that after the bridal gayeties were over, and Graham Lyneton and his wife had settled down to such home happiness as might be in store for them, little Gwendoline was always to be seen by Mrs. Lyneton's side as they rambled in the Lyneton Abbots woods, or went into the village to look after the poor people, or sat in the Manor House pew, under that great black hatchment which had never been removed since the first Mrs. Lyneton's death. Was little Miss Gwendoline really going to live with her new sister-in-law, then? Things began to look very much like it.

Then all the upper-class people of the place, who, being on calling terms at the old house by the church-yard, thought themselves at liberty to express their opinion about the proceedings of its inmates, the lawyer's wife, and the doctor's wife, and the bachelor clergyman's unmarried sister, and the maiden ladies who were gifted with discernment of character, shook their heads, and looked the thoughts which they were too much astonished to express in any other way.

It was a mistake — a grievous, irreparable mistake, one that Mr. Lyneton would find out before long, to his bitter confusion. Such a child as the new wife was, so very young and inexperienced; amiable, no doubt, and delightfully affectionate, quite a pattern of loving-kindness and gentleness, and all that sort of thing, but utterly unqualified to grapple with a nature like that of Gwendoline's, or even to understand it, supposing that she had strength to grapple with it, it being so totally different to her own. If, when Mr. Lyneton made up his mind to marry again—and a decision of that kind was ce

tainly not to be wondered at, for life at the Manor House must have been a terribly dull affair of late, with that stately old Miss Hildegarde for a companion of it—if, then, when Mr. Lyneton made up his mind to marry again, he intended his young sister to remain with him and be trained at home, he ought, as a matter of duty to the child, to have looked out for a woman of energy and spirit—a woman accustomed to the control and management of children—a woman who could have put little Miss Gwendoline in her place and kept her there; kindly, of course, but still with a proper amount of judicious firmness such as, under present circumstances, was not at all likely to be exercised over her. That was the sort of woman Mr. Lyneton ought to have chosen for his second wife, and not this meek, gentle, sunny-faced little creature, scarcely more than a child herself, who, in customary show of bridal white, had lately made her appearance in the Manor House pew, side by side with her grave, austere husband, who, though little over thirty, looked like a regular middle-aged man for quietness and decision of character.

And the lawyer's wife, and the doctor's wife, and the bachelor clergyman's unmarried sister, and the maiden ladies who were gifted with discernment of character, shook their heads again, and prophesied unutterable uncomfortableness, if not something much worse than that, both to the determinate sister-in-law and to the meek, affectionate little wife, who, as they saw from the beginning, was so totally unqualified to grapple with her responsibility; the very last person, in short, who ought to have been chosen to undertake such a responsibility.

For, as they said, they knew the Lyneton women better than the new wife could possibly know them; and little Gwendoline had the make of a real Lyneton in her, only waiting for a few years to develop it. Already there shone through that fair, quiet face of hers, so unchildlike in its gravity, a spirit which nothing could either bend or break, and a determination of purpose against which Mrs. Lyneton, poor thing! might set herself as uselessly as the idle spray sets itself against the rocks. Admiring her lovely little sister-in-law now, as no one could help admiring the child, for her beauty and the grave, sweet stateliness of her ways, the new wife little thought what she would have to contend with by and by, nor what power of steady resistance lay hidden beneath Gwendoline's gracious quietness.

To a certain extent they were quite correct in their judgment. The second Mrs. Lyneton, who, until her marriage, had been brought up by a loving old grandmother in some secluded country place among the highlands of Scotland, was, as they expressed it, quite unfit to "grapple with" such a character as Gwendoline Lyneton's. And she knew it too, which was perhaps the most useful knowledge she could, under the circumstances, have possessed. And so she did not try to grapple with her little sister-in-law, or keep her in her place, or exercise any such judicious authority over her, as the worthy wives and maiden ladies, who knew so exactly what was the proper course to be adopted, would have recommended, had Mrs. Lyneton been wise enough to ask their advice about the matter. But with the far finer instinct of a true womanly nature, she gave just what Gwendoline Lyneton needed, what she had never received so richly before—loving-kindness, that sweet unselfish kindness, which, because it asks so little in return, wins so much. Offering that, she got what Gwendoline would have given for no other price, nor given even for that, had she not, with childhood's quick instinct, discovered beneath it a certain steadiness and quiet self-denial, on which her own strong nature could rest.

So once more all was bright and sunny enough in the old house at Lyneton Abbots, Mr. Lyneton seemed quite a new man since his marriage. True, he was grave and reserved still—that was an unchanging characteristic of all the Lyneton people; but the cold self-absorbed look wore off from his face, replaced by one of half-concealed tenderness, as though he was too proud to show all the love he felt for that fair young Highland wife of his. And those who watched them as they sat together in the Manor House pew, with the little Gwendoline nestling close up to them, said that he could scarcely have been known for the same austere, almost forbidding man, who used to lead such a lonely life in his ancient ancestral home.

That was a happy time too for Gwendoline, though the gossips had prophesied only misery to her from this new, unexpected relationship. They were quite right in dowering Graham's sister with all the placid firmness of the Lynetons, but they did not know how much power of loving lay hidden away beneath, ready to be poured out upon those who had the wisdom to win it. The new wife had that wisdom. Mrs. Lyneton was by no means what is termed a gifted woman, fitted to shine in society and take the lead in conversation. She was loving and true, rather than brilliant and commanding; yet she did what a woman of more splendid attainments might have failed to do, she gained the love of her husband's young sister, and bound it to her by ties which were never broken again. She gave to Gwendoline what no one had ever given her before, since she was old enough to remember it, perfect trust, unquestioning love. Love so different from Aunt Hildegarde's stern affection, with its vigorous outgrowth of axioms and proprieties; different, too, from Graham Lyneton's, for that, though true as steel, was often almost as cold.

Year by year, under the influence of such love so freely given and so freely returned, the girl Gwendoline's character blossomed into a beauty and tenderness which, but for her new sister, she never could have known. Aunt Hildegarde had fostered all the pride and strength of her nature, the steadiness and self-restraint which

long years of loneliness had made needful to herself. But there had been little of the warm sweet sunshine of love in that training, little to bring out the finer touches of sympathy and good-will for those who might hereafter need help and comfort of her. Now, the true woman's life within her found room to grow. Over all the lofty steadfastness of her nature, steadfastness which came to her, like her fair face and placid gentle ways, with the Lyneton name and the Lyneton blood, there grew by and by, like blossoms on Alpine rocks, the sweet flowers of trust and kindness and charity, more surely rooted, perhaps, for the very firmness of the soil on which they grew.

Until Death, which seemed as if it could not leave that old house at Lyneton Abbots long untouched, came again and took the bonnie, brown-haired wife away, and took with her all the sunshine and all the brightness and all the new rich store of joy which she had gathered there. And Graham Lyneton went back to his former loveless, secluded life, this time to come forth from it no more again. And another monumental brass, graven with mediæval device and armorial bearings, placed in the chancel of St. Hilda's Church, told how Jean Wardour, second wife of Graham Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots, had departed this life, sincerely loved and deeply lamented. And Gwendoline, a maiden of sixteen, now found herself alone, where once she had had such gentle companionship, and the old house by the church-yard was quiet as ever again.

Save for the quick step and the merry laugh of a little child, to whom Graham had given its mother's name of Jeanie.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT was the history of the Manor House at Lyneton Abbots, since its present owner's first marriage. And that was the reason why the place looked so unkept and deserted now, though there was still an ancestral homeliness about it, which no neglect could ever destroy.

After Jean Wardour died, Mr. Lyneton never looked up again. That brief Indian summer of happiness past, he fell quietly into the autumn of middle age, from which no returning spring would rouse him any more.

"Quite an altered man," as people used to say, who met him riding down the most unfrequented roads, or, accompanied by his sister Gwendoline, slowly wandering through the woods which belonged to the estate. His hair was quite gray now, and his eyes had lost the Lyneton brightness, and his face was worn with lines, not of age but sorrow. And there seemed no longer any spring or brightness in his life. All the love he could give, had been given to Jean Wardour. All that he could take for solace or comfort had been shut away from him when she died. A quiet, settled, non-complaining melancholy wrapped itself round him. He drew himself away from all but those of his own household. It seemed a weariness to him to speak even a friendly word to those whom once he had welcomed to his fireside, and treated with courteous Lyneton hospitality. People spoke of him as "that poor Mr. Lyneton," and looked after him, if they met him near the village, with longing, lingering pity. For he was indeed so sadly changed. Only a little of the former stateliness clung to him yet, just the shadow of that proud lofty bearing which had caused the master of Lyneton Abbots to be characterized, in his younger days, as one of the noblest gentlemen in all the country round.

Nothing in the way of repairs was done to the house after the second wife's death. Year after year passed over it, each one adding its stain of decay to the old stone moulding, and deepening the mossy garniture of Abbot Siward's cowl, and twining a richer tracery-work of ivy round the tall gables, which cast their shadows at morning-time quite across to St. Hilda's Church. And when the servants told their master of one part after another which was almost falling to pieces for want of a little mason-work, he would say—

"Never mind. Do not trouble me. The place will last my time."

Then, if he was in the garden, he would resume that incessant walk up and down under the shelter of the stone wall, where the vine held forth its ripening clusters, and the tall convolvuluses prisoned the sunlight within their purple bells. Or, if within doors, he would turn away to his books or papers again, or fold his hands for a fresh spell of silent meditation, never seeming to care much how things went on, or what decay Time's finger wrought in the home of which he used to be so proud. His only reply to all they told him about it, was just that one little sentence—

"The place will last my time."

So the old Manor House held itself together as well as it could, and the swallows built their nests undisturbed beneath its gables, and the sparrows reared their annual brood as heretofore in Abbot Siward's head-gear, finding a most eligible and sheltered family residence in that hollow, mossed cowl. And the ivy climbed at its own wild will, from gable to gable, almost covering the quaint little dormer-windows, doing its best to hide the crumbling balustrades, or the worn mouldings which dropped away piece by piece, as storm and damp gnawed at them. And the lichens crept about in patches of russet brown and olive, flushing into gold where they had caught slant sunshine through the elm-tree leaves; and autumn by autumn the vine on the south wall was weighed down by its own purple-ripe clusters, and the hop tendrils climbed higher and higher in search of air and sun, and the dial told off the hours on a plate whose cabalistic devices grew dimmer and dimmer as Time drew his mossy finger across them.

And the patient stone dolphins that held up

the fountain urn opened wide their mouths for the cool trickling stream that would never flow through them any more; and the sweet English flowers grew and faded, as spring trembled into summer, and summer laid its weary head into the golden lap of autumn. And the old carved griffins over the gate-way looked down, grim and defiant as ever, a tawny growth of moss and lichen filling their hollow eyeballs, and hanging beard-like from their opening jaws; and over the homestead there settled year by year a deeper hush, a stillness that might be felt.

Year by year, until Graham Lyneton's second wife had been dead nine years, and Gwendoline was a woman of five-and-twenty.

A noble woman too, moving about that old mansion with a bearing as queenly as any of the ancient ladies, who, when the house was in its prime, and the Lyneton coffers fuller than ever they seemed likely to be again, had dispensed its hospitalities with so royal a grace. She was very like her cousin, the first Mrs. Lyneton, who had been carried out so many years ago, with all due pomp and circumstance, to the family vault in St. Hilda's Church. Gwendoline's own mother, whom she could scarcely remember now, was one of the Hatherleigh Lynetons, the same branch of the family into which Graham had first married, and Gwendoline seemed to possess the distinctive features of the two ancient lines whose blood mingled in her veins. She had the grave quietness of the Lyneton Abbots people, the firmness which, if needful, could bear so much, the self-control which ever told so little; the pride of kin and steadfast unflinching honor, which needed no care of Aunt Hildegarde's to foster them. But the Hatherleigh Lynetons gave her their beauty. She had their grace of figure and fineness of mould; their features, straight, delicate, clearly chiselled as those of the Greek marbles, almost as pale too, save for a passing glow of passion or emotion; their eyes, level-browed, dark gray eyes, which could light up so rarely when feeling stirred the soul within; their voice, low and clear, but with such a sound of purpose in it; their placid, almost moveless calm, their unconquerable will and determination; and their gracious, courteous ways to all, whether high or low, rich or poor, gentle or simple; a courtesy like the graven flowers on some Damascus blade, lying so close to that which, if rudely touched, could wound so deeply, so cruelly.

But, most of all, the spirit of her race showed itself, and the pride of the erewhile Princess Gwendoline kindled within those great quiet gray eyes, if Mr. Lyneton roused himself, as he could even now sometimes rouse himself when the mood was upon him, to tell of the brave deeds and spotless lives of the old Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots.

For in winter evenings, as he sat with his sister and the child Jeanie in that oriel-room, whose oak-panelled walls were covered with dim, faded family portraits, he would relate to them how, in those early days of civil war and bloodshed, or those still earlier days when men went forth to rescue Jerusalem from the Saracen's hand, the Lyneton knights fought so bravely and died so fearlessly. For neither wife nor children, home nor love, had held them back when the battle-field rang out its stirring cry, and there was work to be done for king and country there. And when the war of the Roses emptied so many stately old homes, bidding their warlike lords gather themselves beneath banner of red or white, and either die or conquer in the fight, the bearers of the Lyneton name had been so brave, had fought so desperately for the red rose of the royal Margaret, giving their lives to save it from its pale enemy of York, counting nothing dear to them but how they might be true to her, the noble warrior-queen, and give her back what rude, usurping hands had wrenched away.

Then Gwendoline's eyes flashed, and her pale face used to kindle into rosy pride, as she listened to such stories as these, told in the very home where these same knights had lived, through whose guarded gate-way they had gone forth to danger and to death; so near the old Church of St. Hilda too, where those of them who had not found a grave on the battle-field lay now, their work all done, no need of spear or shield or baldric any more; over them a name carved which never breath of calumny had dared to touch, so stainless was its honor, so noble the men who claimed it for their own.

It was very seldom, though, that Mr. Lyneton roused up in this way. For the most part he used to sit alone in the dusty old library, or spend his time in strolling through the woods, which, since the second Mrs. Lyneton's death, had been strictly closed against all intruders. Sometimes Miss Hildegarde Lyneton used to come down for a few days and take Gwendoline back with her to London, where she introduced her into gay society, and gathered round her those who were worthy, for their noble lineage, to clasp hands with her; but with the exception of these visits, and a state-dinner given once or twice a year for the upper-class village people, Graham Lyneton and his sister lived a life whose peaceful, monotonous seclusion even a hermit might have envied.

"The very image of her cousin," as the people who could remember the first Mrs. Lyneton used to say, as they watched Gwendoline coming down the village street, or turned away from their prayer-books to see the tall slight figure bent low as she knelt by her brother Graham's side in the Manor House pew. Just so, twenty years ago, Mrs. Lyneton, of the Hatherleigh Lynetons, had knelt there, the morning sunlight pouring in through the east window, falling upon braided hair of the same yellow hue, and a cheek so colorless, save for the rosy glow which St. Christopher's robe cast upon it.

Only there was a look sometimes on Gwendoline's face, which no one ever saw upon her cousin's when the first Mrs. Lyneton came to be mistress of the old home by the church-yard.

A look of patient longing, overmastering its loftiness; a light as of some sweet memory or sweeter hope, which, shining through all the steadfast calm, brightened it as sunrise brightens the gray morning twilight.

Such a look the Lady Hildegarde Lyneton might have worn, centuries ago, in those ten long years when she waited for her soldier-lover; he far away in Palestine fighting the Saracens there, she living a lonely life at home for his sake, trusting him so faithfully, waiting for him so patiently, loving him so truly, as the Lyneton women always loved. Such a look the sailor lad's betrothed maiden may wear, when at night she hears the sad sea waves rocking upon the shore, and thinks of him crossing the Atlantic, thousands of miles away, girt round with dangers seen and unseen, yet girt more closely with her prayers.

It was that look which made the little children courtesy with loving reverence when they passed Gwendoline Lyneton in the grassy path by the church-yard. And the laborers, meeting her as they came home from work, doffed their caps, and felt, as they looked into her face, new thoughts stirred within them, thoughts strangely above the rude, low life which daily closed them round; thoughts which had a sort of Sunday quietness about them, like those which come with the sound of church bells, or whispered words of prayer.

And Jeanie Lyneton, sitting in the oriel-window sometimes, and seeing that rare look on Gwendoline's face, breaking through all its statue-like calmness, used to remember her favorite ballad of the "Nut-browne Mayde," quaint old rhyme of woman's love that held so fast through sorrow and doubt and scorn, never losing one gleam of its brightness when danger seemed near at hand, nor even wavering when he to whom it had been given sought to prove her by feigned forgetfulness and falsehood. And Jeanie wondered if the cruel knight looked upon such a face as Gwendoline's, when he tried his lady's love so hardly, and found it ring so true.

"Sith I have here been partynère
With you of joye and blysse,
I muste, alsoe, part of your wo
Endure, as reason is.
Yet am I sure of one plesure,
And, shortely, it is this:
That where ye be, it semeth, pardè,
I colde not fare amysse.
Withoute more speche, I you beseche,
That we were soone agone;
For, in my minde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone."

CHAPTER V.

JEANIE was nearly seventeen now; a bright affectionate girl, just like what her mother used to be, when, in the sunny freshness of her youth, she had come, a bride, to the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

She had lived a very quiet, unconventional life there, chiefly under the care of her aunt Gwendoline, who gladly rendered to the child now some measure of the tender loving-kindness which in years past she had received from that child's mother. Miss Hildegarde Lyneton was, on the whole, tolerably kind to her grandniece. She stood godmother to her, along with Gwendoline, when she was christened; and in her visits to Lyneton Abbots since then, had heard her go through the Church catechism, and given her a splendidly-bound Bible and prayer-book, which were kept in a morocco case, under lock and key, in the Manor House pew, as soon as the little girl was able to go to church and read them. And she also instilled into her, from time to time, a few judicious maxims about deportment and self-control, and the serious responsibilities which devolved upon her as the last representative of so ancient and noble a line of ancestry; to which maxims Jeanie listened with awe-stricken gravity, there was something so truly imposing in Aunt Hildegarde's looks and accent when she uttered them. And, as a finale to these acts of godmotherly duty, the stately spinster had promised her grandniece a visit to London so soon as she should be old enough to go out into society. During which visit she was to be introduced, as her aunt Gwendoline had been introduced, six or eight years ago, into the charmed circle of gayety, and make her appearance at balls, concerts, theatres, operas, and all other suitable amusements, under the chaperonage of the stately old spinster, who, however, only held out this brilliant prospect to her on condition that she prepared herself for it by all due diligence in her studies, and by cultivating such grace of deportment and manner as should fit her for the society in which Miss Hildegarde Lyneton moved.

Jeanie had very little of regular school training. Mr. Lyneton did not like to send her away from him, to any of the fashionable boarding establishments of London or elsewhere, in which she might have been moulded according to the most approved style of young ladyhood; and as little did he feel disposed to break in upon the long-established quiet of the Manor House, by introducing there a lady who might be qualified to carry on the important work of his daughter's education at home. So those accomplishments which were needful for her station, Jeanie learned from masters who came over from Oresbridge. Her Church catechism, as stated before, she committed to memory under the direction of Aunt Hildegarde; and for all the rest of her training, she was indebted to her father and Gwendoline. Or perhaps, most of all, to what she got from the dusty old wainscoted library, her favorite retreat on winter evenings and rainy days; for on its worm-eaten shelves she found many a true friend, whose noble thoughts, told sometimes in legend or romance, sometimes in quaint rhyme or troubadour ballad, did their own work in cherishing a noble womanly life within her. If they left her ignorant of a few modern conventions, and painfully misinformed as to the best means of achieving a brilliant position in fashionable society, they taught her to believe, as few

do believe, in man's honor and woman's truth; a faith worth perhaps the loss of a few advantages which modern boarding-school training might have given her.

And then, in those winter evenings when they all three sat together in the oriel-room, she heard her father tell the histories of the old Lyneton knights, how bravely and spotlessly they had lived, how nobly they had fought for God and their country, how worthily they had borne the name which now she bore. And Aunt Gwendoline, who had heard all about them from old Miss Hildegarde, told her many a story of the Lyneton women, women who were so pure and steadfast, who had left within that ancient homestead memories so precious, and fragrance of gentle deeds which could never die out; and cherished within her a noble longing to become like them, to live with their lofty purpose, to love with their lowly steadfastness—a woman's true love being ever the highest form of lowliness—to die with their fearlessness, and then to live again in the memories of those who came after her, as they lived now, a name for all that was gentle and pure and good.

So that Jeanie, if slightly deficient in the usual branches of a sound English education, philosophy, use of the globes, cube root, square root, etc., and not knowing quite so much as some girls know about heights of mountains, lengths of principal rivers in South America, populations of great cities, and latitudes and longitudes of the leading places in Europe, had yet passed through another sort of training quite as useful in its way. A training which gave to her a noble idea of womanhood, a true love of justice, a hatred of wrong and oppression, howsoever shown, whether in great nations or little families; a fine appreciation of bravery and generosity, and a desire to follow, in her own quiet life, that example of faithfulness and devotion and purity which others had left behind them. A training that, which few French governesses or Parisian finishing establishments could have bettered.

Then, for out-door companions she had the old serving-man, whose brain was a vast storehouse of fairy-tales and traditions; and Rollo, the Newfoundland dog, with whom she had many a romp, to the imminent peril of the flower-beds and the box borders, and even of the three stone dolphins themselves, whose open mouths formed an admirable receptacle for the sticks and stones which Rollo was to leap for and then bring back to his little mistress. And when she was tired of Rollo or the serving-man, Rose Beresford, a child about her own age, who had come to stay at the Rectory, was always ready for a swing, or a game at battledore on the overgrown grass, plot, or hide and seek among those great Portugal laurels and lilac-bushes at the shady end of the garden. But Rose only stayed at the Rectory ae few weeks, and then went back again to her friends in Ireland, and from that time until now, when she was nearly seventeen years of age, Jeanie Lyneton had been dependent for society upon her father, Aunt Gwendoline, and the old library; three tried and trusty friends, among whom she managed to make a very pleasant thing of life.

She was a bright-looking girl, with her mother's blue eyes and sunny brown hair, and girlish, unaffected ways. Indeed, those who could remember the first and second Mrs. Lynetons used to say, as they saw Mr. Lyneton's sister and daughter sitting together in the Manor House pew, that he might almost fancy his two wives had come back to life again—supposing any man ever *could* fancy such an awkward possibility—so exactly did they seem to be reproduced in the present ladies of the family, not only in outward look and bearing, but in character too, so far as that could be judged of from the very slight intercourse which the Lyneton Abbots people were accustomed to hold with their neighbors.

For Jeanie had little of the Lyneton pride and stateliness about her. It remained yet to be proved whether she had much of the firmness and strength of will which, in centuries past, had nerved the Lyneton women to such steady endurance and such noble faithfulness; endurance and faithfulness sung of eloquently enough in many of the old ballads and romances which Jeanie loved so well, or which had been handed down from generation to generation in household story and tradition.

True, there was not wanting, even in Jeanie Lyneton, though, a touch of reserve, the faintest little chill of hauteur with strangers, or with the upper-class families of the village, who were on calling terms at the Manor House. She had inherited from her father just as much as marked her of the Lyneton race; all the rest, her pretty, gentle ways, her guileless look and fair open countenance, came to her from the bonnie Highland lady, whose brief sojourn in the old house at Lyneton Abbots was yet remembered by its retainers as a sunny spot in their lives.

The Manor House people were always very much talked about in the village. Holding themselves apart from its society, having but slight intercourse with the so-called aristocracy of the place, the clergyman, the lawyer, the doctor, and the maiden ladies of genteel extraction, whatever could be gathered up of their life and conduct was seized and commented upon, not always to their advantage. Mrs. Lucombe, the doctor's wife, considered it quite a slight upon her position in the village that she was not received with more cordiality at the Manor House; and she did not fail to take what satisfaction she could for that slight, by making invidious remarks upon those who had offered it. Because although her family might not be of so much distinction as the Lynetons, and though she could not look back upon such a long line of ancestry, still, in a small place like Lyneton Abbots, the doctor and his lady, especially if they were people of education—as she was proud to say both herself and husband were, she having been at school on the Continent in her

younger days—were always received on a footing of familiar acquaintance, if not of intimate friendship, even among the decidedly upper-class families; which position had never been awarded to her by the Lyneton Abbots people. And she certainly *did* think, that in consideration of Mr. Lucombe's long connection with the family, he having been their medical attendant ever since the first Mrs. Lyneton's removal, she might have been asked in now and then in a friendly way, just for a cup of tea in an evening, and a little confidential chat afterward, instead of being put off with a state-dinner once a year, and the very stiffest of moves when they happened to meet in the village, or coming out of church on a Sunday morning.

That sort of thing Mrs. Lucombe said showed a want of cordiality, and a disposition, on the part of Miss Lyneton and her brother, to set themselves too much above the rest of the people. Which was a thing they had no right to do, money being so scarce with them just then, as every body said it was, and Mr. Lyneton being put to it almost past his ability to keep things together in their usual style. Every body knew well enough that, in spite of his splendid pedigree, Mr. Lyneton was a wretched man of business, the merest noodle at management that ever was seen, and had let his estate get into such a state that it could scarcely keep the family going, to say nothing of portions for his sister and daughter when they married, as, poor things! they were most likely expecting to do; though where the husbands were to come from was a question she could not take upon herself to answer, seeing that Mr. Lyneton kept himself so much to himself, and never took his family into society, where they were likely to meet with any thing eligible in a matrimonial point of view. It was really nothing short of sinful for a man with a marriageable sister and daughter, like Mr. Lyneton, to keep them shut up from January to December in that old house by the church-yard, never asking any body to the place, or putting them in the way of being settled suitably to their position. A man ought to be ashamed of himself to act in that selfish way, when other people were dependent upon him for their prospects in life.

Mrs. Jacques, the lawyer's wife, to whom Mrs. Lucombe, the doctor's wife, thus imparted her private sentiments, said that for her part she cordially acquiesced in them. For she had thought, ever since she came to the village, that the Lynetons held themselves apart from the rest of the people in a way that was not becoming, considering how very little of the needful they had to keep up their pretensions. And especially in such a small place, where every body was expected to be on pleasant terms with every body else, and to do all that could be done in the way of social intercourse. And though she had not Mrs. Lucombe's claim to intimacy at the Manor House, having only come to the village within the last few years, still she thought that her *previous* position in the country town of Grantford, where her husband had been a most influential member of the corporation before he took the late Mr. Langton's law-practice at Oresbridge, ought to have entitled her to at least cordiality, on the part of the Manor House people; a cordiality which certainly had never been extended to her yet, nothing having passed between them up to the present time except the most distant civility, not even a call of ceremony, to say nothing of invitations to dinner or attentions of that sort, which professional people generally expected when they came to a fresh neighborhood.

Mrs. Jacques said that she could not understand parties holding themselves so very much aloof. It was what she had never been accustomed to, even from families whose landed property was much more considerable than Mr. Lyneton's, and whose balance at the banker's was in a much more satisfactory condition than, by all accounts, his appeared to be at the present time. Indeed she had heard it whispered—though she should not like such a thing mentioned as coming from her, there was no knowing how far things went when once they began to be repeated—but she *had* heard it whispered that it was almost more than the master of Lyneton Abbots could do to hold his position at all, and keep up the customary establishment of servants, and carriages, and all that sort of thing, which the Lyneton people had been accustomed to. And really, for her own part she should not feel very much distressed if things *did* come to a crisis, and they had to leave the place entirely for a time. Exclusiveness was a thing she could not tolerate, especially when there was nothing to keep it up with, and the sooner it was put a stop to, in some way or other, the better.

CHAPTER VI.

So Mrs. Jacques said. And then the maiden ladies of genteel extraction and small investments in three per cents, put in their word, and said their little say about the extreme reserve and retirement of the Lyneton Abbots people. And when they had turned these over and over, and round and round, and looked at them in every possible light, and made every variety of remark that could be made upon them, they proceeded to the matrimonial prospects of the Misses Lyneton, aunt and niece, and subjected them to an equally severe criticism.

It certainly was very strange, they said, that Mr. Lyneton's sister had never married. Young, not more than five-and-twenty they were sure, beautiful, high-bred, belonging to one of the oldest families in the county, with every thing to recommend her but a well-filled purse, it was unaccountably curious that she should have remained single so long. Because, though facilities for a prosperous matrimonial settlement at Lyneton Abbots were very scanty, owing v

the selfish love of retirement which prevented Mr. Lyneton from introducing the ladies of his family into society as they ought to be introduced, still she had had very good opportunities in London. Miss Hildegarde Lyneton mixed with a very good circle there, and had had her niece with her very frequently since she was of a proper age to go into company; and would doubtless forward her interests much more than Mr. Lyneton, living shut up in that old Manor House from year to year, would ever think it worth his pains to do; and yet nothing seemed to come of it. It was very strange. They could not understand it at all.

They knew one thing, though. Gwendoline Lyneton did not keep that noble name of hers, year after year, because no one had asked her to change it. They could tell of several gallant gentlemen, not so long ago, some military men, some in the style and habit of clergymen, one or two with the fashionable flash of the mercantile aristocracy, who had been seen loitering in the old garden, on different occasions, or attending Miss Lyneton to St. Hilda's Church, or riding by her side, when with light touch she guided her fiery little Arabian steed over the moors of Lyneton Abbots. Gentlemen who had well-filled purses, and bulky rent-rolls, and a good pedigree—some of them at any rate—and homes far more princely than that tumble-down old mansion, whose owner, if report said true, was too poor to keep it in a decent state of preservation. And it was Miss Lyneton's hand that these gentlemen came to ask from the lord of the manor, and her love that they came to win, and it was her proud name they would fain have persuaded her to exchange for their well-filled purses and bulky rent-rolls and splendidly-furnished homes.

But they had gone away, one after another, never to make their appearance any more in the old garden, or the Manor House pew, or by Miss Lyneton's side on the moorland roads. Why, the gossips could not tell, unless the lord of the manor was hard to please, or the lady slow to be won. And now for some months past, no gay cavalier from a distance had reined up his steed before that old griffin-guarded gate-way. Miss Lyneton had taken her walks and rides alone, always alone, except for her grave, quiet brother, and this fair-faced young niece, fast flushing into womanhood now, ready in her turn to break the hearts and bewilder the brains of over-susceptible gentlemen.

Indeed, although Mrs. Lucombe had given it as her opinion that the obstinately reserved habits of the lord of the manor would consign both his sister and daughter to spinsterhood, and though the Lyneton Abbots family never went into company, never attended any of the Oresbridge balls, concerts, public assemblies or other recognized facilities for getting themselves well settled in life, yet the indefatigable gossips thought they had already got scent of something which might lead to matrimonial results for Mr. Lyneton's daughter.

Had not young Mr. Allington, they said, the collegian who was reading with the Lyneton Abbots clergyman, been seen more than once at church, casting admiring glances in the direction of the Manor House pew, where Miss Jeanie Lyneton sat, looking so pretty and unconscious? Though of course she must have known well enough all the time who was taking so much notice of her, he being the favorite nephew of a bachelor baronet, and of most enviable prospects. And when Miss Maberley, the clergyman's sister, who of course had the best opportunities in the world for judging of any little matter of that sort, was asked for her opinion on the subject, did she not tell of evening after evening spent by Mr. Allington at the Manor House, under pretense of looking over some old books in the library, very rare and valuable folios, which were to be got from no other library in the neighborhood? But, as Miss Maberley knew well enough, the only book he cared to read was Miss Jeanie's face; and she would venture to say, if the truth were confessed, he could not so much as tell the name of one of the musty old folios or quartos from which he pretended to be making such lengthy extracts, to help him in reading for his degree, he said. All very fine, but Miss Maberley thought it was something altogether different from a bachelor's degree that young Martin Allington was seeking, night after night, in the musty old library at Lyneton Abbots.

Miss Maberley said too, and nobody contradicted her for saying it, that Mr. Lyneton might do worse for his pretty young daughter than give her to Sir William Allington's nephew; for the old baronet was positively rolling in wealth, and had more than one good living in his gift, and thought all the world of Martin; and, with a check or two which would never be missed from his banker's account, could keep the lord of the manor going, or set him on his feet again, if, as report whispered, things were getting into such a terribly tangled state with him.

So the upper-class people used to gossip on as they made their morning calls or assembled for friendly cups of tea in each other's snug little drawing-rooms. And still life wore on its even round in the old house at Lyneton Abbots. "Mr. Lyneton, poor man," as people nearly always called him now, paced up and down by the vine-laden wall, dreaming may be of life's by-gone brightness, which would never come back to him any more; or perhaps puzzling his weary brain over the management of the estate, which was, as the gossips said, getting into a terribly tangled condition. Indeed, it was so far beyond his control now, that he was trying to meet with some one who would take the accounts in hand, and look after the balancing of the weekly list, and the ingathering of the rents. And he was at the present time in correspondence with a young man who was coming as clerk to one of the great iron-masters of Oresbridge, and who had a spare afternoon every week, which he wished to employ in some book-keeping engagement. Perhaps then things would begin to look up a lit-

tle, and the estate might be got into something like order. At any rate, a change of some kind must be made in the management of it, or it would soon come to complete ruin.

Gwendoline Lyneton too, not knowing what the little gossiping world said of her, lived on her own quiet life, apart as it had ever been, except in those few years of the second Mrs. Lyneton's time, from much sympathy or kindness, hers not being a nature that could stretch out far for either. The outward life which she had to live was lived with all gravity and graciousness. Of the inner life, that life which rayed sometimes through the paleness of her face, a light as from some holy shrine within, no one had any need to ask. It belonged to herself alone, and held within it a joy with which no stranger could intermeddle. If it held doubt or fear sometimes, that also, like the joy, was for herself alone.

Only, month by month, as the time drew on for the Indian mails to be delivered, there would be the faintest gleam of excitement in those great gray eyes, and a touch of restlessness on the face which was generally so meek and still. She would sit at one of the little dormer-windows, hour after hour, listening for the postman's step, the sound of his knock echoing through the old house. If the letter came, that rare light deepened in her eyes. If it did not come, she waited patiently for the next month's tidings, never showing by word or look that any hope of hers had been disappointed, never giving possible trouble or anxiety of her own leave to break that girded calm which was almost the Lyneton badge, so strangely did it seem inwrought into their characters.

Jeanie knew whence those letters came, and was always glad for the brightness which they put into her aunt's life. She could just remember a tall, military-looking man, who used to play with her, and toss her about, five or six years ago, when she was a little girl in pinafores; and give her sweets too, which had been brought all the way from Oresbridge; dainty bonbons, with mottoes and devices, the like of which could never be got, for love or money, from the good-stuff woman's shop on the village green. And he would swing her sometimes for half an hour together, on the old swing under the apple-tree at the back of the house, always making her kiss him when the swing was done; which she did not like at all, for his mustache scrubbed her cheek almost as roughly as Nurse Appleton's terrible bath towel. If it had not been for that, though, she should have liked him very much, for he was so bright and merry.

And she had also a very dim recollection of seeing him, a year or two later than that, standing with Aunt Gwendoline at the garden gate, one summer evening when it was growing dusk. They were talking together under the old stone griffins, almost hidden by the shadow of the trees, which were so thick and green in that July time. Then he *had* gone away down the *Oresbridge road, but Aunt* Gwendoline stayed just where he left her, there in the shadow of the trees, until the day-light had all gone, and the stars began to peep out one by one, and, like the glare of far-off burning houses, the red glow of the Oresbridge furnaces could be seen upon the eastern sky.

After that evening Jeanie never had any more swings, never any more romps among the flower-beds of the old-fashioned garden, or sugared bonbons, with colored mottoes and devices upon them. And she thought that, if Mr. Demeron had been as kind to some one else as he had been to herself, Aunt Gwendoline must miss him very much indeed.

That was all Jeanie knew. Nor, as the years wore on, one after another, did she ever know any more than that. For Mr. Demeron's name was not often spoken among them, and though the letters which came now and then were read aloud and commented upon, without any sort of reserve, yet there was little in them that interested her. They told of a life in which she had neither part nor lot; chiefly about barrack experiences, and gay doings in Bombay society, and sometimes a hunting expedition up the country, or a few inquiries about Lyneton Abbots, never any thing more than that. Only Aunt Gwendoline's face always brightened when they came, and so Jeanie was glad to see those Indian letters, though she never cared very much to hear them read.

But one Sunday morning in church, the clergyman had to take for his first lesson the story of Jacob's sojourn with Laban. Reading it, he came to that little verse, over which, for thousands of years, men have wept and wondered; that little verse wherein the great God has not thought it beneath his greatness to embalm a story of human love, and send it down to us upon the stream of time, pure, sweet, fresh as when, in the childhood of our race, it was first lived, and told, and written.

"Jacob served seven years for Rachel his wife; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love which he had to her."

Jeanie looked up to her aunt's face just then, and saw the well-remembered smile upon it.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT was Gwendoline Lyneton's love story. The only one she had ever known, the only one she would ever care to know. That was why the noble gentlemen who came, on matrimonial thoughts intent, to the old house at Lyneton Abbots, departed with sadder countenances than when they came, to place their well-filled purses and bulky rent-rolls and broad acres and splendidly-furnished mansions, to say nothing of their transferable affections, at the feet of some less fastidious maiden. Until by and by the suitors ceased to come. There was no more reining up mettled steeds at the gates which led out into the foot-road by the church-yard. There were no more conferences with Mr. Lyneton in the or

wainscoted library, conferences always ending gloomily enough for one of the parties concerned in them; and no more studiously courteous farewells in that stone porch, Abbot Siward, meanwhile, looking down on the departing guest from beneath that crumbling cowl of his with quaint, grave face that promised to reveal no secrets, nor betray the disappointment that had come to pass. Trusty Abbot Siward, who, from his niche over the door-way, saw so much, and told so little; whose stony, lichen-bearded lips never moved for smile or jeer, as the spruce cavaliers rode away down that narrow grassy path, with no lingering backward look for wave of lady's kerchief from the balustraded terrace, or bright glance of lady's eyes from the ivied dormer-windows.

Gwendoline Lyneton wanted no love of theirs. All that she could give had been given already. Far across the seas was one, who, taking the treasure of her heart with him, had left her his. And now she only waited until the slow years, passing one by one, should bring him to her again, and give to her life its full joy and crown.

Yet no formal word of this had ever been spoken between them. They knew that they belonged to each other always, but they were quite free. For when, five years ago now, Maurice Demeron first came to Lyneton Abbots, came with his father, an old college companion of Mr. Lyneton's, for a day's shooting over the moors round the estate, and the two days had lengthened into four, and the four into a whole long week, wherein there had been many a sweet ramble with Gwendoline through the laurel-shaded walks of the old garden, many a quiet talk among the maple copses, and much learned, which, for one of them at least, could never be quite unlearned again; when, five years ago, Maurice Demeron first came to the Manor House and met Mr. Lyneton's fair sister, "Greta" as he used to call her, because she was so like the Lady Margareta of Hatherleigh Lyneton, whose portrait hung in the oriel-room, they were both of them young, too young, Maurice Demeron's discreet father said, to think of burdening themselves with the responsibilities of married life. And he, though of good family and fair prospects, having just got an Indian commission, was poor too, and being, like the Lyneton people, proud of spirit, he thought scorn to bind down, by vow or promise, a girl to whom for many years he could offer neither home nor position in return for the love which she gave him. He admired her very much. He had seen no one like her in all that young, untried, happy life of his. She was the one, he thought, to fill up his heart and brighten his whole future; but he could not tell her so yet, save by the unspoken language of many a tender look and tone. He was too proud to ask his precious gift from Mr. Lyneton until he could take and keep it always. He must toil through those five long years of Indian service; he must get for himself an honorable name and a good position. Having done this, he would come home, and as a brave soldier claim the prize which as a boyish lover he scarcely dared to ask.

And so, as they two had stood together at the gate on that July night, just before he went away to Southampton to embark for foreign service, he had only said to her—

"We can trust each other, Greta."

To which she had answered, with all the firm self-control of the old Lynetons—a control which would so rarely let them tell by word or look all that lay beneath it—

"Yes; we can trust each other."

And then he had said good-bye to her, and gone away, both of them knowing that five long years must pass before they could meet again. Five long years, in which they might find new friends, or cherish new loves, or haply die, and so only clasp hands again where they should belong to each other forever.

That was how they parted; the question which should have bound them together unasked, unanswered, save by just these words—

"We can trust each other."

Yet through all these years Gwendoline had been true to him. What the Lynetons gave once they gave forever, let the gift cost what it might. Many a family history, handed down from father to son, through long generations past, told how faithfully those ancient knights and ladies, resting now in St. Hilda's Church, had kept their troth, once given, through long years, and even through a life-time of patient waiting. For it was never known yet that a Lyneton's word had failed, or a Lyneton's promise betrayed any who trusted it.

And, though she could only gather it from chance sentences, and allusions in those letters of his which were always written to her brother, and considered as public property in the family, yet Gwendoline felt, with a woman's instinct, that he was true to her. No word, no bond, no signed deed or betrothal ring could have given them to each other more entirely than that last farewell, spoken in the dusky stillness of the July night—"We can trust each other, Greta."

Yet sometimes she doubted. Perhaps it was the very truth of her own heart which made her do so. When month after month passed, and no letter came; not a word to tell that she was held in remembrance as faithful as that which she gave; or when the letter did come, and her quick eye, glancing over it, could single out no sweet sentence which might hold for herself far other meaning than it bore to careless readers—just a mere detail of barrack life, its frequent episodes of gayety, balls at Government House, hunting-parties with the staff officers, public banquets and the like, only these, nothing more than these, then there would arise a little cloud upon the clear blue sky of her faith, and she would say to herself—

"If he should forget!"

For she remembered the old stories which she had heard her father and Aunt Hildegarde tell. There was the Lady Berengaria Lyneton, who

waited so long for that Crusader knight of hers, but he never came back. And there was the fair Alice, who spent a whole long life of widowhood for the gallant soldier-husband, who, she thought, had been killed in the wars of the Roses. And he had never been killed at all, he had been living far away with some beautiful lady, parted only from his faithful wife by a death far sadder than any which sword or spear could give. And there was Gertrude, golden-haired, blue-eyed, the loveliest of all the Lyneton women, who, meeting her betrothed lover after seven years of absence and waiting, met him hers no longer, the love faded, the trust gone. And with just one sad, quiet look, which held in it no rebuke for all the pain he had caused her, she parted from him, and went her way, after a few weeks of pining sickness, to the rest of her kindred, under the chancel stones of St. Hilda's Church.

Gwendoline used to think of these old stories told in many a ballad and romance, by the English troubadours, and she would ask herself, might some such cruel lot be in store for her? Bound in the world's eye by no promise, free to choose, as she herself, but for that last farewell, was free to be chosen, having nothing to hold them to each other but that one little word "trust," a word which for some has such scant meaning, would he keep all that she had given him, or would he not?

Gwendoline Lyneton thought such thoughts as these, when, weary of waiting for those Indian letters, she sat alone in the dormer-window, her own room window, whose shadow, at early morning-time, fell upon the east end of St. Hilda's Church. She could not help them; they would come. For truly the waiting had been very long, and there was ever that one little sad thought, stealing up through all the hope, still that one little dark cloud creeping over the heaven of her trust—

"If he should forget!"

Then with a very proud gesture, she would put back the rippling yellow hair from a face somewhat paler now than when, five years ago, Maurice Demeron pressed his farewell kiss upon it. And those gray eyes, which erewhile had had a look of sadness and tenderness within them, would flash beneath their level brows, as she saw, by the sunlight gleaming in through the chancel window, the canopied tombs, under which her ancestors lay; those ancient knights and ladies who had lived so purely, and loved so truly, and died so fearlessly. And there would be never another doubt in her heart, nor shadow of change there, as she whispered to herself—

"He trusted me, and when did any trust a Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots, and find that trust betrayed?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"WELL, Mr. Mallinson, I've given it a fair consideration, and looked the matter over back and front, and endways and sideways, and every way as it's best to be looked at, before giving of ourselves to make a start in it; and I've settled it can be done, and well done too, and so I think we'd best do it. That's what I say about it."

And the spare, somewhat angular, middle-aged woman, who had been subjecting the matter in hand, whatever it might be, to such a severe exhaustive analysis, looked across the table toward her lord and master, to the intent he should affix to such analysis the sign-warrant of his approval.

But Mr. Mallinson, a sandy-haired, ginger-whiskered man, of forty-eight or fifty, who was discussing hot muffins with business-like rapidity, and in the pauses of that interesting employment marking off with a broad, flat and not delicately clean thumb nail, the rise and fall of the flour markets, as chronicled in the *Mark Lane Express*, did not appear disposed to turn any immediate attention to the subject which his wife had brought before him. He merely gave a grunt of mitigated approval, capable of being assigned with equal propriety to the hot muffins, the state of the flour markets, or the exhaustive analysis.

Mrs. Mallinson, however, knew her husband's little peculiarities, and knew also how to manage them with becoming wifely cleverness. She had not been married for five-and-twenty years without discovering that Japhet Mallinson, in common with the mighty Cæsar of old, could give his attention, if needful, to more than one thing at a time. And so, appropriating the grunt of approval as directed to her proposal, she went on—

"Yes; I've got it all settled what I mean to have. A gentleman for breakfast and tea. That's what I could get through comfortable, without feeling him lie heavy upon me. And I've had my eye on the papers this two or three weeks past, to see if one could be got reasonable. Only it's rather awkward meeting with one at this season of the year, the time being so far on, and our not caring to have him for dinner, on account of his wanting so much cooking. It's such a business is cooking extra in the middle of the day, and a gentleman too, as naturally wants more attending to than a lady, if you don't take on an extra girl in the kitchen, which is what I don't mean to at the present. I don't know though as I should mind having one for dinner on Sunday, when Betsy stays at home to cook. She might as well have him extra as not, and her dawdling half her time away, as I believe and feel convinced she does, when I'm not in the way to give an eye to her. Should you mind having a gentleman for dinner, on Sundays, Mr. Mallinson?"

Mr. Mallinson gave another grunt. Apparently he had no objection to this pleasing little diversity in their bill of fare, seeing that the cooking could be done without additional trouble. But from the manner in which his wife looked at him when she made the suggestion, it was easy to infer that if he had manifested any con-

scientious scruples with regard to this bold innovation upon the customs of Christian Oresbridge, they would have counted for very little. Mrs. Mallinson had set her mind upon a gentleman for the above purposes, and a gentleman she was determined to have, if he could be met with at a reasonable price.

"No, I didn't suppose you'd be any thing but agreeable to it, inconvenienced as you wouldn't be with the cooking. And then," continued she, giving an unexpectedly civilized turn to the hitherto somewhat cannibalistic tendency of the conversation, "it would be something useful into the house-keeping money. Them two rooms over the shop, coals, gas and waiting, with breakfast took up for him of a morning, and his tea when he comes home of an evening, for a guinea a week, wouldn't be amiss, as the markets is; and that's as little as we can do it for, to make it pay, and servants' wages what they are, to say nothing of house-rent, and I don't believe there's another place in England so shameful for rent as this genteel end of Oresbridge. A guinea a week, shall that be it, Mr. Mallinson?"

A third grunt, which Mrs. Mallinson took to intimate that that should be it.

"Not as I'm partial to a lodger, Mr. Mallinson, by any means, for I always said they was a troublesome thing to do with in a house, unless it was a single gentleman like the present instance, and took up with business in the middle of the day, so as to leave the house free in a manner while you've got through the thick of the work. And even then, it isn't what I ever had much of a fancy for, only there's calls upon us now, Mr. Mallinson, as there didn't used to be before we left the old congregation. People look up to us to be burning and shining lights where we are now, and it's an expensive thing being a burning and a shining light, where a cause isn't as you may say fairly started and able to run alone. But he wouldn't take much out of our pockets, wouldn't a gentleman for breakfast and tea, while the markets keeps steady, and they're steady now, aren't they, Mr. Mallinson?"

Mr. Mallinson singified with a fourth grunt that the markets *were* steady, and Mrs. Mallinson, who had a more brilliant gift in conversation than her husband, went on—

"Besides, being particular as he is to this end of Oresbridge, on account of its being near to Lyneton Abbots, and him having there to go once a week, if we didn't have him Mrs. Green would. She's been as keen as mustard after having a gentleman to board with her ever since Mary Green comed home from school; and I'd take him myself, if it was for nothing else but that he shouldn't go to her, for she's been that mean in our direction, has Mrs. Green, ever since we left the old congregation, as it's more than a professing Christian has a right to be, and she ought to be let feel it, and she shall too, for I know she's been looking out for a boarder ever since the time of the split."

"And why is the young man partic'lar to this end of Oresbridge?" asked Mr. Mallinson, who, having finished his muffins and reached the bottom of the market list, was now in a position to enter more fully into the merits of the case.

"For convenience sake, Mr. Mallinson, as I mentioned to you before, only your mind's always so set upon them markets. He's got a situation in one of the iron works about here; it don't occupy him only until noon of a Saturday, because of the men giving over work sooner then, and so the rest part of the day Mr. Lyneton of the Lyneton Abbots has engaged him to look over his accounts, and mend up the estate a bit. And time somebody did mend it up, for if what folks says is true, it won't hold the roof together over their heads much longer."

"Ay. It's poor paying land is Lyneton Abbots," remarked Mr. Mallinson, settling himself back in the leather-covered arm-chair by the fire, with the satisfied air of a man who knows that the world is going well with him—"poor land, and overmuch saddled with game. Not but what he might make a good penny out of that, though, if he was to have it brought up to Oresbridge shops and sold, which he's overproud to do by all accounts, just as if hares and them sort of things wasn't made to fetch money. Why, if that there land was mine, I should make two or three hundred a year by nothing else but selling the game at a vallyation to some one as would shoot it off. But Mr. Lyneton's the poorest hand at turning a penny as ever I heard tell of, and always was; and if somebody don't look sharp for him, there'll be a wind-up there before long."

"And serve them right too," replied his wife. "There's a stop wanted putting to their pride this good while past. Sold up may be, and go to a smaller house, and the sensiblest thing they could do, if only they'd brought their minds to it when the second Mrs. Lyneton was took, and there didn't want so much appearance keeping up. Of course when the female head of a family's took, and there isn't no grown-up daughters to put forward into world, as there wasn't when the last Mrs. Lyneton died, appearances doesn't want keeping up; and there was no need for a carriage nor nought of that sort, and a man to wait, as always costs ten times more than he's worth. But it's a sensless thing is pride. Pride's the senselessest thing ever was."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed. She had a very peculiar way of sniffing, quite independent of cold in the head, or local irritation, or any thing of that sort. It was just her way of putting a finishing touch to the expression of her sentiments. And a very vigorous finishing too, for it drew her face to one side in a slightly upward direction and her shoulder after it, and was generally accompanied by a defiant toss of her head. That sniff was Mrs. Mallinson's characteristic. She always made use of it when she had said any thing conclusive, just as some people give themselves a general shake, or bring down their open palms upon the table, or indulge in a brisk series of coughs and jerks, when they have come to the

end of an argument. Mrs. Mallinson used to sniff in that way at chapel too, when the minister said any thing which met her views in an unusually satisfactory manner. Her nose and mouth would give a twitch on one side, her right shoulder would be upheaved, and then came a sonorous inhalation, audible to the utmost corner of the place, and which said as plainly as any words could have spoken—

"Excellent, Mr. Barton; just the very thing I should have said myself."

And this was a sniff of unusual decision; for if there was one thing more than another which drew forth Mrs. Mallinson's animadversions to their bitterest extent, it was pride, such pride as Mr. Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots showed when he declined turning himself into a licensed game-dealer.

"It's the senselessest thing ever was, is pride, and I'm thankful to say it never crept into my family, because it's a curse wherever it comes, to say nought of it's being agen' the Scriptures, which don't vally a party for good descent nor nought of that sort, but only because they put out their best endeavors to do their duty and get on in the world, and give proper support to the body as they're connected with. Which I've always done and always mean to do, and nobody shall have it to say against you and me, Mr. Mallinson, that we don't hold up the new body as it ought to be held up, and give it a helping hand with tea-meetings and subscriptions and being willing to take the chair and every thing as a professing Christian ought to feel it on their consciences to do, as a privilege for the cause."

Mr. Mallinson said nothing, but chinked the half-crowns in his pocket with an abstracted and not radiant expression of countenance. Apparently the giving of subscriptions to the new body was a somewhat dubious privilege, to say the least of it, though one of which he was frequently called upon to avail himself. And to be a burning and a shining light was indeed, as Mrs. Mallinson had before expressed it, very expensive. He thought sometimes that the position of a dip candle, if not so honorable, would be more in accordance with his private sentiments. But Mrs. Mallinson had no notion of her husband becoming a dip candle, when by expenditure of sundry five-pound notes he might shine in the new body as a superfine composite.

"Yes, it's a privilege for the cause, as I always say when they come to you to take the chair, and it can't be done under a guinea at the collection, being a public situation, and every one seeing what's put upon the plate. But it's the interests of the cause has been given us to look to, and it'll go ill against us both, in spirituals and temporals too, which it's all our duties to look to, if we don't keep ourselves up to the mark and show an example to our enemies in the old body, as are always on their watch-tower seeking occasions of offense against us, mean-spirited things as they are, and every thing in their own hands as they want to have, and no regard to the rights of the people. I haven't patience with 'em. And I always feel it laid upon me as my duty to say as much to Mrs. Green, who sticks to the old body on account of their supporting the business. Not as I wish any thing, I'm sure, but speaking the truth in love, and lifting up my voice against oppression, as it's the duty of every professing person to do, and as you and me, Mr. Mallinson—"

How far this exposition of the whole duty of professing persons might have extended, is uncertain. Most likely to some considerable length, as Mrs. Mallinson prided herself upon a gift in "profitable conversation," meaning thereby conversation of a so-called religious tendency, and was wont to exercise it freely when occasion offered. But just then a boy's voice sounded through the green-curtained glass door which separated the sitting-room from the provision establishment.

"Shop!"

Mr. Mallinson sprang up as if electrified, pushed away his cup and saucer, and hurried to his station behind the counter, leaving Mrs. Mallinson to conclude her oration to his empty chair.

Apparently her thoughts drifted back again in progress of time to the exhaustive analysis with which the conversation had commenced; for after a season of quiet meditation, she sniffed decisively, and said to herself in a brisk business-like sort of tone—

"A guinea a week, and his tea and breakfast took up to him. That's what I've made up my mind to take him in for, and reasonable too."

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Japhet Mallinson, baker and flour-dealer, lived in one of the more genteel business streets at the west end of Oresbridge, midway between the chimneys, warehouses, gin-palaces, dens, cellars and alleys of the town proper, and those "elegant villa residences and desirable family mansions," as the advertisements called them, which were dotted at irregular intervals along the road between Oresbridge and Lyneton Abbots.

Indeed the neighborhood, toward its western extremity, was so very genteel, that Mrs. Mallinson, who was a woman of advanced notions, greatly objected to her husband's place of business being denominated a shop, and had several times suggested to him the advisability of describing it in his circulars and advertisements as a "Wholesale and Retail Provision Establishment." Nay more, her ambition had of late taken a loftier flight, and on the strength of a few tins of fancy biscuits and a jar or two of pickles which had made their appearance in the front shop, she would fain have induced her husband to exchange for the words "Italian Warehouseman," that exceeding vulgar "Japhet Mallinson, baker and flour-dealer," which

at present figured in conspicuous yellow letters above the worthy little man's stock of cerealian produce.

Such a change, she said, would push the business in an aristocratic direction, besides giving the establishment an air of superiority over the other provision shops further down the street. For the purse-proud merchants' wives and daughters, who would scarcely so much as condescend to put their dainty feet upon a flour-dealer's door-step, or suffer their salmon-colored kids to touch his dusty counter, would not think it at all beneath them to draw up their carriages in front of an Italian warehouse, and order fancy biscuits to an indefinite extent therefrom. And a carriage gave such a finish to a place of business. Mrs. Mallinson must confess that if there was one thing more than another which caused her breast to swell with satisfaction—not to say pride, that being a thing she never indulged in—it was when a carriage drew up at Canton House and Mr. Mallinson came out to receive orders. More especially did it rejoice her if any of the members of the old body happened to be passing at the time; or if Mrs. Green, the pale-faced widow who kept a concern somewhat similiar to their own, only of course on a very much smaller scale, further down the common end of the street, happened to be standing at her shop door, looking out for customers. For Mrs. Green, poor thing! never had such a thing as a carriage standing in front of her pitiful little display of tea cakes and three-penny loaves; and though she did keep herself so very silent, and thought nobody good enough to associate with that slim, meek-looking daughter of hers, just home from school, yet every one knew it was all she could do to be ready for rent-day, and keep a little cash in hand, so as to be able to pay the travellers when they came round for orders. Mrs. Mallinson *did* like Mrs. Green to be standing somewhere in sight when a carriage came up to Canton House. It was such a triumph, besides letting the widow see that the new body had some one belonging to it who could hold up its respectability, and keep it on its feet, as she might say, equal to any thing the Park Street congregation had been able to do among themselves.

But Mr. Mallinson was a wide-awake little man, not, as he expressed it, to be caught with chaff. And though he respected Mrs. Mallinson as a remarkably capable, energetic woman, thrifty, prudent, far-seeing, the very woman, in fact, that a man ought to have at his side if he meant to get along in the world, still her judgment was not infallible, especially where there was a chance of getting a little rise in a social point of view. She was a trifle high in her notions was Mrs. Mallinson, if he might venture to hint any thing against such an admirable wife as she had been to him for nearly thirty years; very fond of getting genteel custom to the shop, even though they had to wait years for the payment of the bills, as was generally the case with those great people. And always aspiring to push the business in a fancy line, instead of keeping to the flour sacks and meal tubs which had served them so well in years past. An Italian warehouse might be a very fine thing in its way, but a downright, straightforward bread and flour shop was much more productive. Mr. Mallinson knew whence the greater part of the money came that chinked so pleasantly in his till from morning to night. Not from the carriage people who took such long credit and wanted so much waiting upon and humoring, and always had so much fault to find if the quality of the goods supplied was not of the best and choicest; but from the lower classes, respectable, well-to-do mechanics' and journeymen's wives, who lived in neat little rows of ten-pound houses at the east end of the street, and who would never have dreamed of going to an Italian warehouse for the sixpenny-worth of cheese, or the half-pound of bacon, or the three-penny twist, which after all brought in a better percentage, being always sold for ready money, than the large orders, involving as they did such long credit, which came from the great people on the Lyneton Abbots road.

So the obnoxious "Japhet Mallinson, baker and flour-dealer," still figured in conspicuous yellow letters over the loaves and biscuits and sample cases of different priced flours, and the only concession which the judicious tradesman made to his wife's aristocratic prejudices was to have the words "Italian Warehouse" printed on the biscuit-bags, for the benefit of the great folks, who might nibble their ratafias and maccaroons with a supremer relish when they could trace the pedigree of the same to a less questionable source than a commonplace baker's shop.

Mr. Mallinson was a very active man; active in business, in politics, in religion, in every thing which he took up. Very matter-of-fact too, with an admirable talent for getting on in the world. He had begun life, as most young men begin it, with a fine store of visions and aspirations. When his father bound him to Mr. Penny, the provision-dealer of Dalston Rise, he was dimly conscious of longings after the infinite. He felt within him the stirrings of a soul which scorned the low restraints of trade. He entered upon his apprenticeship with a heroic resolve to live exclusively in the top story of his nature. Wealth, it was the curse of noble souls; ease, it was the grave of lofty endeavor; the world in general—so Mr. Mallinson stated in several sonnets composed for the *Dalston Chronicle*, but never published—was one great charnel-house of blighted hopes and murdered aspirations. Give him a cottage in some lonely sequestered dell; give him the twin soul which Fate had destined to share his joys and sorrows, and then the busy stream of life might surge on at its own wild will. He was not born to battle with it—he had hopes and aims and longings far beyond it, and superior to it.

These were Mr. Mallinson's private aspirations as he weighed out pounds of bacon and cheese behind the counter of old Mr. Penny's shop, at the lower end of Dalston Rise. Of course they came to nothing. They were very pleasant in

their way, as a sort of scenic background to the otherwise painfully earthly surroundings of his life there; but they did not do to get a living with, and so little by little he let them slip away —which was perhaps, under the circumstances, the best thing for them to do. By the time he was out of his apprenticeship, he had given over writing sonnets, and instead betook himself to the learning of book-keeping by double entry. He also ceased to dream of sylphs with golden hair and languishing eyes, and surrendered himself to the attraction of Matilda Penny, his master's daughter, a stout, robust, large-boned damsel of one-and-twenty, whose hair was any thing but golden, and whose eyes had a decided cast in them. But she was a capital business woman, as good as half a dozen ordinary men for looking after things, and not letting the grass grow under her feet. And instead of taking her to live in an arbor of woodbine and honeysuckle in some lone, sequestered glade, which indeed would have been a most unsuitable residence for a person of her active domestic habits, he brought her to the prosperous manufacturing town of Oresbridge, and there set up in business for himself as a baker and flour-dealer, in which honorable calling he perhaps achieved as much usefulness as though he had given vent to his aspirations and spent his life in writing sonnets for the *Dalston Chronicle*.

He was a man very much respected in Oresbridge, and a useful little man in his way. He had a great gift for rooting out public abuses and holding them up for inspection; getting them righted if he could, but if not, still making a wonderful fuss and commotion over them. A great reviler of Government extortions, and taxes, and church-rates, and all that sort of thing, which—at any rate the church-rates and the extortion—might be done away with if only the people would rise to a sense of their importance, and give their voice in the ruling of the nation as Englishmen had a right to give it. He had no notion of people lying down to be trampled upon; of vestry meetings levying church-rates, and submissive householders paying them without protest or opposition; of government imposing extra duties on this, that, and the other article, and expecting the masses to pay it without so much as a murmur or a question. All that sort of thing, as Mr. Mallinson used to say, was what he had no patience with. He was a friend of the people, a stanch voter on the Liberal side, a stickler for rights and immunities of every kind, so far as they could be got.

A pushing man too. Already he had elbowed his way into the town-council. By and by he hoped to become an Alderman; and when that dignity was once gained, what hindered that he should sit in the chair of supreme civic authority, and envelop that square-built little person of his in the coveted insignia of mayoralty itself? An ultimatum beyond which even Mrs. Mallinson's proudest thoughts could not aspire.

For many years Mr. Mallinson had been a very stirring man in the Park Street congregation, one of the largest, most prosperous and flourishing Dissenting congregations in Oresbridge; great in committee meetings and vestry meetings, and public opportunities of all kinds. Active there, too, in rooting out abuses, and crying down an over-rigid discipline, and resisting the claims of those who sought to maintain authority over him. Insomuch, that when a latent spirit of discontent, which had for some time been smouldering among the more turbulent members of Park Street, broke forth, a year or two before this time, into open rebellion, Mr. Mallinson, true to his colors, joined the opposition side in church politics, and hoisted the standard of rebellion in such purpose, that he was the means of organizing a split in the congregation, and carrying away two or three hundred of its members; who, placing him at their head, renounced their allegiance to Park Street discipline, laws, and all other restrictions whatsoever, and had now established themselves as a separate body, having a chapel and supporting a minister on their own account.

That was a proud day for Mr. Mallinson, when, after much previous muttered wrath and secret council-taking with others of his disaffected fellow-members, he made a formal renunciation of his connection with the old chapel, and, as the phrase was, "went off with the split." Mr. Mallinson got then what he had been seeking so long—place and power. In the Park Street congregation, with its well-compacted system, its carefully-digested code of discipline and laws, which were steadily enforced, in spite of little private sputterings of discontent; with its ranks of intelligent members and its well-trained, energetic minister, Mr. Mallinson was a mere unit, a quite insignificant person, that could easily be spared, that would never be missed. The old cause would go on just the same, and do its work and fight its battles and win its victories quite as well without him as it had ever done with him.

Not so the new cause. Mr. Mallinson was supreme there. He was head, backbone and feet to this young prodigy, which had sprung forth, Minerva-like, fully armed from the brain of the paternal Jove. He was acknowledged champion of the "split" in Oresbridge, supreme authority in all the committees, vestry meetings, argumentations and disputations of the youthful sect; a veritable primate, nay, even more—a sovereign; for was he not head of church and state, too?—holder of the purse-strings, as well as guardian of the religious interests of his fellow-malcontents?

Mr. Mallinson liked that. He was fond of supremacy. It pleased him to be deferred to and looked up to. It was a glorious thing to say, as he sat at the head of one "split" committee after another, "This motion shall be carried, this other motion shall not be carried." "This minister shall be invited, that shall be rejected." Better such a position, very much better, than sitting among the unnoticed many

of the old congregation, and having to bend to its discipline and be lost among its multitudes, and only have his social status recognized at all when called upon to pay his part toward the support of ministers who acknowledged no right of his to assume authority over their ways and doings. The "split" had placed Mr. Mallinson on a wonderful elevation. Standing there, he rubbed his hands and drew himself up with dignity, and shook that fiery-locked little head of his, and said to the assembled congregation of Grosmont Road—

"See what a great man am I!"

But it was expensive. That was the worst of it, very expensive. And business was rather flat just now, in consequence of a temporary depression in the iron trade, which always told perceptibly upon the middle-class population of Oresbridge. Mr. Mallinson's till had not overflowed with its accustomed liberality for the last few months, so many of the mechanics, and artisans, and iron-workers, whose wives brought their contributions there in times past, having left the neighborhood to seek employment elsewhere. But the infant cause, which was scarcely of age to stand alone yet, had to be nursed and reared to something like maturity with great expense of bazars, and tea meetings, and other public gatherings—at all of which "our highly respected founder and supporter," as the more private members called Mr. Mallinson, was expected to come forward with guineas and five-pound notes, to say nothing of performing the rites of hospitality to ministers from distant places, who had sympathies with the belligerents, and so came to aid them in resisting what they had represented as an unwarrantable act of tyranny.

Mrs. Mallinson had said truly enough that it was an expensive thing being burning and shining lights, as she and her husband were expected to be in the new body. Her religion cost them uncommon dear, she used to say, ever since the split took place in Park Street; and if it had not been for that meek-faced widow Mrs. Green, across the road a little further down, who was always on the watch for "returning prodigals," as she called them, coming back to the old home; and if it had not been for the office-bearers and the minister of the parent congregation, who would be sure to say with a pitying air of paternal superiority, "We told you so; you see you had very much better have stayed with us from the beginning," Mrs. Mallinson scarcely knew sometimes whether she could not almost bring her mind to go back to her old place among the worshipers in Park Street, where the collections only came once a fortnight, and the minister was not always sending across for installments of his stipend from Mr. Mallinson's private purse.

That was why she had made up her mind to have a gentleman for breakfast and tea. It would not involve much difference in actual outlay, and the extra guinea a week would help to repair the ravages which the voracious appetite of the juvenile cause was continually making on Mr. Mallinson's resources.

Besides, if the gentleman in question happened to be a person of good prospects and tolerable means—and a situation in an extensive concern like the Bellona iron works was a fine opening for a young man, if he only had energy enough to make the most of his opportunities; there were plenty of men about Oresbridge now, living in almost princely mansions, and counting their gains by hundreds of thousands, who had begun life with a clerkship in an iron work, and then gradually worked their way up to a share in the concern, and finally become senior partner—if then this expected lodger turned out to be of tolerable means and fair prospects, there was no telling what the results might be for Sarah Matilda.

She was quite old enough now to begin to think about such things, and Mrs. Mallinson could not deny that it would be a great satisfaction to her own mind to have the dear girl comfortably established, and in a promising track for future well-doing; such a track as a prospective senior partnership in an extensive concern like the Bellona iron works, would be likely to open out. Not that Mrs. Mallinson looked at such things in a worldly point of view; she was thankful to say she had always cultivated a frame of mind quite above that sort of thing, and it was her opinion that professing people ought to set their affections on more enduring objects than fair temporal prospects and promising means. But people must live, whether they made a profession or not, and if they had a sufficiency to support the cause handsomely and put something by every year, it was a blessing for which they ought to be thankful, and which they ought to put forth their best efforts to obtain. And she must say she should like to see dear Sarah Matilda comfortably settled, if it was only to disappoint Mrs. Green, who was always bringing forward that daughter of hers and praising up her home training and domestic virtues, as much as to infer that Sarah Matilda had not been brought up to know every thing that was proper in a house in addition to her music and French, which they had paid so much for when they sent her to finish off at Miss Veneering's fashionable boarding-school.

But some people were so jealous. That was just where it was. Some people were so jealous. They couldn't bear to see any one else's girls better dressed, or better looking, or better finished off than their own. Pride, nothing but pride, and pride was the senselessest thing in the world. There was nothing in the world so senseless as pride.

And then Mrs. Mallinson gave a vehement sniff, which sent her face all on one side, and set off up stairs to make arrangements for the new lodger.

CHAPTER X.

THE Hansom cab, a shabby-looking vehicle, by no means calculated to make Mrs. Mallinson's heart swell with satisfaction, even if pale-faced Widow Green should chance to see it from behind her coffee canisters, had driven away from Canton House, and the luggage had all been taken up stairs and deposited in a small bedroom to the front.

No very great all, either, as Mrs. Mallinson and Sarah Matilda remarked to each other when it had been duly turned over and examined, and put into its proper place. A middle-sized portmanteau, with sundry dints and hollows in its battered surface, hinting of corresponding scantiness within. That portmanteau might have held twice as many things had its owner been fortunate enough to have possessed them. If Mr. Deeping's purse was not better filled and his prospects more promising than that lean and cavernous portmanteau, Sarah Matilda would do well to turn her thoughts in another direction, for certainly it gave but little indication of a senior partnership within any reasonable time.

Besides the portmanteau there was a little travelling-bag and a very small square box, which, judging from its weight, might be filled with books. Also an umbrella, evidently bought new for the young man to come from home with, for the ticket had not yet been taken from it. Only alapaca, though, Mrs. Mallinson noticed, as she pulled it half-way out of the case; no daintily-carved ivory handle or engraved silver-plate, nothing but a wooden stick with a hook to it; such an umbrella as might be bought for seven-and-sixpence at any second-rate outfitter's shop in Oresbridge.

Mrs. Mallinson sniffed. Not a sniff of approval this time, however, and set the unfortunate umbrella down in the corner with a thump, wondering whether, for all other intents and purposes save the weekly guinea, Mr. Deeping might not as well have gone to Mrs. Green, the pale-faced widow over the way, who had been wanting a gentleman for breakfast and tea this last six months past.

"May be there's more to come, though," she said. "I shouldn't wonder if he's waiting to see if the situation suits before he has all his things brought. I never blame folks for being cautious, and looking where they're going to put their feet. Come along, Sarah Matilda, and get to your practicing. It'll be as well for Mr. Deeping to know you've got a taste for music."

Sarah Matilda went her way like a dutiful daughter, and was soon at the piano in the back parlor, warbling "Ever of Thee," whose dulcet strains, mingling with the odor of newly-ground coffee and the musty fragrance of smoked hams, floated up to the little sitting-room where Mr. Deeping was spending his first evening of Oresbridge life.

It was a showily-furnished room, every thing in it very cheap and new, having been purchased with a view to lodgers. Mrs. Mallinson generally had a lady or gentleman at the county and race balls; and when there happened to be a festival or a great gathering of any kind in the place, she was not averse to making a few pounds by letting the drawing-room and best bedroom, though until now she had never had a regular lodger "week in and week out," as she expressed it.

There was no lack of adornment, such as it was. Some scratchy crayon landscapes in gilt frames, with Sarah Matilda's name conspicuously placed in the corner, hung upon the vividly papered walls. There was a marvellous collection of wax fruit, done by Sarah Matilda, under a glass shade on the centre-table. There were mats and screens and tidies and cushions and fancy baskets and anti-macassars of all conceivable shapes and colors, also done by Sarah Matilda, whose gift in this department was fully equal to that of her mother in practical exposition. And over the fire-place was a three-quarter's length portrait of the young lady herself, in her best dress and drop ear-rings, supported on each side by her "Pa" and "Ma," in their best apparel too, Mrs. Mallinson having a bristling green silk that stuck about in very unmanageable folds, and Mr. Mallinson a resplendent suit of black, unpleasantly tight about the arms; the same suit which he had new upon the occasion of his taking the chair at the last public meeting of the split.

The new lodger took notice of all these things as he sat by the fire in a very slippery easy-chair, which creaked with every movement of its restless occupant. There were no intellectual resources in the room, except a few smartly-bound annuals, birthday presents or school prizes to Sarah Matilda, containing the usual modicum of elegant extracts and sentimental sketches; and so after looking through these, and examining the crayon drawings and making a general survey of the interior arrangements of his new quarters, Hugh Deeping turned his attention to the prospect outside.

That was scarcely more inviting, Grosmont Road was not a much frequented thoroughfare, except at certain times of the day, when the merchants who lived further down toward Lyneton Abbots went to and from their respective places of business. Now, late in the evening, scarcely any one was stirring. A few mechanics' wives, with baskets on their arms and one or two children dragging at their gowns behind, were doing their shopping for the morrow; and some loose workmen, pitmen, puddlers and others, of whom there was always a supply in the Oresbridge streets, were sauntering about with their hands in their pockets, looking in at the shop windows, or making remarks, not always complimentary, to the passers-by. There was a gin-palace a little higher up the street, out of which, though it was considered an unusually well-conducted house, a drunken man rolled now and then, and staggered to the nearest lamp-post, embracing it affectionately, to the amuse-

ment of those of his companions not so far overpowered as himself, who were loitering about. Sometimes the performer was a woman, and then great were the shouts of merriment, rude and coarse were the gibes which were flung at her from pitmen and mechanics, who forgot that they had ever been tended by a mother's care or known a sister's gentle kindness.

Just opposite Mr. Mallinson's establishment, the green and crimson jars of a chemist's shop flashed their light upon the pavement, and next to that a pastry-cook's window displayed rows of penny pies, and dingy-looking bride-cakes under dirty glasses, and boxes full of Arabian delight at a half-penny a square. And a little lower down, past a milliner's shop and an outfitting warehouse, Mrs. Green's coffee canisters glimmered in the gas-light. Poor Mrs. Green, who would have been so thankful for a gentleman to board with her, who had such trouble to make her rent and meet her payments and keep that thin delicate girl of hers comfortably at home, instead of sending her out as shop-woman, as every body said she ought to be sent.

That was about all, yet for want of more interesting occupation, Hugh Deeping lingered at the window half-hour after half-hour, watching the scant stream of life go murmuring past. But he had never lived in a street before, and all its sights and sounds were alike unfamiliar to him. It was like turning over the pages of a new book, to watch even the very commonplace things and people which could be seen from the windows over Mr. Mallinson's shop. Sometimes a smart young dress-maker hurried along to her home in one of the quiet little terraces behind Grosmont Road, not unconscious of her pretty face or the admiring glances which were cast upon her as she tripped along with such light, careless step; or some ragged urchins clustered round the pastry-cook's shop with great exclamations of wonder and delight, or a street organist would set up his dismal wail until ordered by the policeman to move on. And once a haggard, hollow-eyed woman, with two or three children in suspiciously clean pinafores, placed herself in front of the curb-stone and droned out a melancholy ditty, contrasting strangely enough, and, but for the woman's weary look, ludicrously too, with the dulcet love-strains which Sarah Matilda still kept pouring forth from the back parlor.

He was listening to the poor creature, who perhaps years ago had a pleasant home in some far-off village, and had climbed on a father's knee for good-night kisses, when two men came past, carrying a coffin between them, whistling as they went, stopping now and then to change it from shoulder to shoulder. They were jolly, good-natured looking men. It mattered little to them how sadly their knock should echo by and by in some darkened home, nor with what aching hearts some stricken husband or wife would listen to their heavy footfall on the stair as they took that coffin up into the death-chamber, and lifted the poor wasted form into it, and screwed the silver-tired lid tightly down over a face on which no more unavailing tears would ever fall. They had carried home many a coffin in their time, and they expected to carry many another before that month was out. For autumn was always a busy time for the Oresbridge undertakers; people used to die so fast of small-pox and fevers in the cellars and garrets of its overcrowded courts as soon as the fogs set in. And then the miasma which bred in these same overcrowded, ill-drained courts, crept silently forth and found its way ere long to the stately mansions and elegant villas, exacting from them its pitiless toll of death and mourning.

A common sight, a very common sight, but it made Hugh Deeping shudder and turn aside. Just so carelessly three months ago, two other men had carried another coffin, his father's coffin, to that darkened room away up in the pleasant lake country. Carried it there on no such dreary evening as this, but in the merry July time, when birds were singing and flowers blooming and leaves fluttering in the sunshine, and when if his mother could have wiped her tear-dimmed eyes, she might have looked out past many a wooded hill and purling stream, to the little Congregational chapel, where her husband, whose coffin they were just bringing home, had preached for the last twenty years.

CHAPTER XI.

Hugh Deeping bowed his head upon his hands, there in Mrs. Mallinson's showy drawing-room, among Sarah Matilda's pictures and fancy-work, and thought very bitterly of the past three months which had wrought such a change in his life, snatching away all its hope and promise, and binding him down to a future in which he must toil through the dreary mechanical routine of task-work, mere counting-house drudgery and book-keeping, instead of treading in his father's steps, and some day winning for himself, perhaps, a name of which that father might be proud.

For the elder Mr. Deeping, though but a poorly-paid minister, and having very injudiciously—so his friends said—entangled himself and damaged his prospects for life by marrying a wife with no fortune but her sweet face and pleasant temper, was an ambitious man, and would fain have had his only son stand high in that honorable calling of which he was only a humble member. So Hugh was thoroughly well trained at a good school in the town where his father preached, and when they found that he was a bright intelligent lad, earnest too, and of steady purpose, they took the little store which had been carefully gathered up as a provision for old age, and spent it in sending him to college, intending that when his divinity course was over, he should go to Germany to study for a year or two, and then come home to take up his father's work.

It was a hard pull for them. Many a scant meal and threadbare dress did those college years of Hugh Deeping's cost. Many a weary hour did his father spend, toiling over magazine articles or extra sermons whose scant pay might help to furnish books for the young student. Many a pleasant excursion was put aside, many a day's pleasure denied, that the money might go toward Hugh's college expenses, or those years of study in Germany which were to come afterward. But they knew all would be right in the end. The lad was working on bravely and steadily, winning for himself a good reputation for talent and learning among the professors. He would make a right noble man some day. and when he had achieved name and fame, and a good standing-place in the Church, they would not need to repent these years of hardship and self-denial.

So Hugh toiled on at college, full of hope and purpose, cheered through all his hard study by thoughts of the quickly coming future, in which he would be able to pay back all that had been so dearly bought for him. For when once he came back from Germany with the wisdom and experience which those two years at Tübingen would give him, it would be so easy to make his way, and he would work so hard and spare no pains if only the world might be better for his living in it, and if only he might do something that might make his father proud of him.

But Hugh had only been at college half the divinity course when death came to that quiet home up in the lake country. The strong man was smitten down and the bread-winner taken away. Then followed great lamentations among the people, who for so many years had listened to his words of teaching. And addresses of condolence were sent to the bereaved widow, with eulogiums on the deceased pastor—praises of his wisdom, his talent, his self-denying zeal, his unwearied efforts for the benefit of his charge.

Which addresses of condolence were followed, after a reasonable interval, by the choice of another pastor, because the church would suffer loss if left uncared for more than a few weeks. And then Mrs. Deeping had to leave the quiet little lake town and go forth to seek a home among strangers, carrying with her the best wishes of her husband's people; they should always remember her in their prayers, they said, and think of her with respect and affection; but carrying with her, alas! a very scant store of that which is even more needful that good wishes and kind remembrances in this hard, matter-of-fact world, where the most pitiful of tradesmen must needs send their bills in once a year at least, and the tenderest-hearted landlords must have their rent punctually paid, or be under the painful necessity of getting it in other ways.

Mrs. Deeping went to Jersey with her son and daughter. Perhaps Mary Deeping might get employment in teaching among some of the upper-class families of the island, to whom her ladylike deportment and gentle speech would recommend her, even though she lacked the qualifications for a first-class governess.

And for Hugh? Ah! there were no more terms at college now, no more poring over Greek and Latin authors, or trying of his budding genius in debates and orations among his fellow-students. No years of study at Tübingen either, to be followed by a joyous home-coming and an honorable place among the ministers of his father's Church. In quite another way than that must Hugh Deeping win his daily bread now. And as for name, fame, noble standing-place and other youthful visions which had once flitted before him in a not far distant future, he must turn away from them; they were his no longer, never could be his now. To earn as much money as would keep the wolf from the door, this and not a fine literary reputation must be Hugh Deeping's care henceforth.

He had to leave college. His uncle, a well-to-do haberdasher in London, declined providing the means to keep him there. If his parents had consulted him before sending the youth to any such place, he should most decidedly have given his voice against the scheme. The ministry was a poor thing for getting a man on in the world, a very poor thing. If a young man did not happen to have influential friends in the denomination to which he belonged, he might be idling about for years before he earned as much as would find him bread and cheese, to say nothing of getting himself comfortably established in life. Hugh had had a good education, his uncle said, and now he must make the best of it. A lad with a good education could do almost any thing, if he only gave his mind to it, and did not hamper himself with foolish notions about caste and respectability and intellectual advantages, and all that sort of thing.

And just at that time an acquaintance of this sensible haberdasher uncle's, senior partner in some extensive iron works in Oresbridge, being in want of a young man as counting-house clerk, Mr. Giles Deeping recommended his nephew to the situation, and succeeded in procuring it for him. A providential opening, Mr. Deeping said, such a one as Hugh might have waited for years and years. There was nothing like iron for getting a youth on in the world. Iron had been the making of many a man who had started in it with far worse prospects than Hugh. After all, it might be a blessing in disguise that the Rev. Mr. Deeping had been taken off so suddenly, and thereby his son had been compelled to abandon a profession which, though honorable enough in its way, was, to say the least of it, precarious, very precarious; not nearly so much to be depended upon as iron, in a worldly point of view. Mr. Sparkes would give twenty pounds salary for the first quarter, with promise of an increase if the new clerk gave satisfaction. That was more than most young men got in their first situation, but Mr. Sparks always looked favorably upon minister's sons, because the steady habits which they generally had were of marketable value in a large concern like the Bellona iron works.

Steadiness and integrity in a young man who had to do with the monetary affairs of a large concern like that were worth almost any thing, and Mr. Sparkes always made an allowance in consideration of them. Hugh had the ball at his foot now, he had only to go on and prosper.

Which encouraging reflections, or others to the same effect, Mr. Giles Deeping expressed in a letter to his nephew. And then, with a few admirable exhortations, and a five-pound note, he left Hugh to Providence and his own endeavors.

Eighty pounds a year, with board, lodging and clothing to be provided out of the same, to say nothing of the remittance which, cost what screwing and pinching it might, Hugh determined to send quarterly to his mother and sister! It was scarcely to be called a munificent salary, and the young man might be excused for not breaking forth into abundant thanksgiving when his uncle's letter arrived. However, he must take it and make the best of it, nothing more suitable being likely to fall in his way at present.

At first Hugh thought of employing his spare Saturday afternoons in private teaching, for he was already pretty well up in classics and mathematics; but happening to see Mr. Lyneton's advertisement in a London paper, his mother persuaded him to try for that situation. He did so, and was successful, greatly to Mrs. Deeping's satisfaction. It would take him out into the country, she thought, and would give him a little open-air exercise at least once a week, which, after being confined all the rest of his time in that close counting-house at the Bellona iron works, would be so much more healthy for him than in-door teaching.

Also—for the little woman was herself somewhat ambitious, and had searched into the social status of the Lyneton Abbots family—it would bring him into the society of upper-class people, and perhaps do something toward getting him on in the world. A little upper-class society was such an improving thing for a young man, especially if his previous training and associations had qualified him to avail himself of its advantages. And certainly, though his mother said it herself, no one need look down upon her son Hugh; for though his worldly prospects had been so unfortunately overclouded, and that social position which he once hoped to have filled, removed out of his reach, still he himself remained the same, proudly equal in mental cultivation and refinement to the requirements of the most select society, worthy not only to be tolerated, but even prized, by any one who could appreciate intellectual worth.

Already, in imagination, she beheld him domesticated with the good people of Lyneton Abbots, who, doubtless, when they learned his previous history and expectations, would hold out to him the right hand of friendship, and welcome him into their home circle, not more for kindness than for the advantage which even they might gain from such pleasant companionship as he could afford, shut out as they were, by choice and long habit, from the society of many people in their own rank of life.

"A privilege on both sides," dear little Mrs. Deeping said to herself, as she packed up a few extra-fine collars and pocket-handkerchiefs in her son's scantily-filled portmanteau, and carefully brushed the broadcloth coat, altered from one of his poor father's, which must be Hugh's best for so many, many months, and put a pair of black kid gloves into a little box by themselves, cautioning him always to wear them when he went to Lyneton Abbots on Saturday afternoons.

For Hugh, in common with some other young collegians who have a taste for literary pursuits, was a little bit careless in matters pertaining to dress, often ignoring his gloves altogether when he went for a walk, or wearing both of them in one of his side pockets, which, as his mother said, was no practical use whatever. And people in the Lynetons' rank of life thought so much about these little things. Indeed, it often made all the difference in the world to them whether or not a man was particular about his gloves, and the cut of his coat, and the set of his collar. She hoped dear Hugh would be careful then, and do his best to make a favorable impression on a family who would doubtless have it in their power to put so much brightness and pleasantness into his life. Not that she wanted him to cultivate a foppish anxiety about his dress—nothing of the sort; indeed, she was sure her boy would never descend to any thing so low as that; but there was a degree of care which a gentleman and a minister's son was bound to bestow upon himself, and that was the sort of care she wanted dear Hugh to take whenever he went to Lyneton Abbots, and not have his collar all on one side, or both his gloves in his pocket, instead of on his hands, and his coat as if it had been drawn through a wool-sack, as it very often looked when he went out with his sister in the holidays. He must remember his position, and live up to it, even though things were not so bright with him now as once they were.

Poor little Mrs. Deeping! As though the choicest of French kid gloves, worn with religious exactness, or the most faultless coat that ever Stultz invented, or even the rarest companionable qualities, and an intimate acquaintance with all the Greek and Latin poets extant, could make Gwendoline Lyneton and her brother give more than high-bred courtesy to a man whose ancestors went no further back than his great-grannfather—a man, moreover, who, whatever his internal qualifications might be, was counting-house clerk to an iron-master, and lodged at a second-rate bread and biscuit dealer's shop in the Grosmont Road, and had an uncle in the haberdashery line.

Poor Mrs. Deeping!

CHAPTER XII.

So Hugh said good-bye to his mother and sister, and instead of going back to the studious retirement of his college chambers, there to hold sweet converse with the great minds of other ages, to rehearse the flowing numbers of Homer, or Pindar's stately odes, or the grand thoughts of Æschylus and Euripides, mingling all these with thoughts of a future when he should win great sway over the minds of men, and in time, perhaps, carve out for himself no mean name in his country's literature—instead of all this, he found himself that same evening in a shabby-fine drawing-room over a provision-dealer's shop, redolent of Wiltshire bacon and American cheese; an essentially vulgar, commonplace room, in whose atmosphere it seemed impossible to think of any thing more sublime than groceries and pickles. A room crammed with tawdry fancy-work and scratchy crayon libels on the fair handiwork of nature; so different from the little college study where in months past he had spent so many pleasant hours, with its air of peaceful seclusion and refinement, its memories of great thoughts and noble purposes— thoughts and purposes, alas! quite useless now; for what had a counting-house clerk to do with great thoughts, and what noble purposes could he ever achieve beyond the perpetual adding up of long rows of figures, and the earning thereby of eighty pounds a year, with the distant hope of an advance if he behaved himself well, and gave his whole soul to the ledger? A very noble purpose that; one that seemed worthy to match the room, with its shabby-fine furniture, and the cheese and bacon odor which pervaded it.

And then, when he grew tired of the sublime interior prospect, the tawdrily curtained window would admit him to another equally elevating. Trade, trade, nothing but trade; boot shops, confectioners' shops, druggists' shops, drapers' shops, never even a book-seller's window to be seen up and down the whole long line of street, or any thing to remind him that life had other needs than those of eating, drinking, and being clothed. And for sound, instead of the wind swirling up through groves of beech-trees which shaded all the college garden, or the sweet chime of bells calling to evening prayer, there were rude street noises ever jarring past; drunken men laughing and screaming, barrel-organs grinding out their interminable screech, hollow-eyed women singing for half-pence in front of dirty curb-stones. And when all these were silent for a few minutes, some lilting song, strangely unlike the sweet ballads his sister used to sing to him, came winding up the stair from that little back parlor where Sarah Matilda was cultivating her taste for the fine arts. Sad contrast between the life that was and the life that had been—the life that might have been!

And then that coffin carried past by a couple of whistling journeymen! As though it was not enough for him to have lost so much—to have been disappointed so bitterly, but he must needs be reminded of all the funereal past, have death and the grave so rudely thrust back upon him when he would fain have put them away for a little season, not from want of love to the dead, but that he might win strength better to toil for those whom the dead had left dependent upon him.

Nor was the state of the case much improved when a brisk knock was heard at the door, and Mrs. Mallinson came in, all bustle and fuss and importance. Mrs. Mallinson had no intention of letting her new lodger feel oppressed with loneliness on this the first night of his sojourn under her roof.

"You'll excuse me coming in again, sir"—it was the third time she had made her appearance since tea—"but I just stepped up to say as if you're fond of music, and would like to hear my daughter at her practicing, we shall always be quite willing for you to make yourself free to come into the back parlor of an evening. We always sit in the back parlor of an evening when this here room is let, and if you like to turn the gas down and let the fire out, you'll find every thing comfortable, and yourself welcome like one of the family, as it's always my wish to make people feel themselves at home, and always was. And she's uncommon clever at her music, is Sarah Matilda, and so she ought, too, for we paid six guineas a year for it, did my husband and me, when we sent her to Miss Veneering's to finish off her schooling. Six guineas a year, not to mention the pieces, which came to as much more, and forty pounds for a piano for her when she was finished off complete. But she keeps it up well, she does, and takes the high notes beautifully, if only she isn't nervous, which strangers makes her; and she leads all the singing at our new chapel, so that we shall overget the expenses of her schooling by and by; for leaders with good voices wants a deal of pay here in Oresbridge, where there's so many places of worship, and all of them well looked to for singing, as I may say."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed, a vehement one-sided sniff, which seemed to draw her whole face after it in a lateral direction, insomuch that Hugh wondered how her nose, and mouth, and facial muscles in general, would ever regain their normal state. They did, however, and Mrs. Mallinson went on. It was such an easy thing for her to go on when once she had set off.

"Yes, we shall overget the expense by and by, unless"— and here Hugh's landlady smiled complacently—"unless she should take it into her head to settle, which there's many things more unlikely; for being an only child, and us, as we may say, tolerably well-off, she's a good deal sought after. Not but that it would be a great loss to her father and me, being such a useful, handy girl about the house; for I always brought her up to know about cooking and preserving, and that there; and, indeed, to the cause, too, I may say, for she's always willing

to take a tray at a tea-meeting, is Sarah Matilda, or stand at a bazar, or make herself useful in any public way whatever, as I say it's the duty of a professing person to do, and to be a burning and shining light, as the Scripters says, and not to hide our talents under a bushel, which there's no manner of sense in doing, especially when the cause in the midst of us wants supporting, as it does very much, sir, in this here place, and looks to me and my husband to keep it up in a manner, as we shouldn't feel ourselves drawn out to do if it wasn't for him being at the head of the cause, and having to take the chair, and keep it on its feet with five-pound notes, or a guinea in the plate, being such a public situation."

And here Mrs. Mallinson stopped for an instant in her tide of talk, and bustled across the room to brush off a stray crumb or two which had been left on the tea-table.

"It's that stupid Betsy, sir, as never clears the tea-things off properly; but I'll give her a good scolding about it as soon as ever I go down, and you shan't have nothing of that sort to complain of no more, sir."

"Oh! pray don't give yourself the trouble," replied Hugh, who, sitting by the window, and still gazing absently out into the dim street, had scarcely had the opportunity, even if he cared for it, to put in a word. "I assure you I did not see the crumbs until you noticed them. Pray do not let me bring the poor girl into trouble. I dare say it was dusk when she cleared the things away."

Though really, kind-hearted as he was, Hugh would almost have wished the threatened scolding to take place, if only that it might hurry Mrs. Mallinson away, and so put a stop to this inexhaustible monologue. But Mrs. Mallinson showed no intention of going away. After clearing off the last of the crumbs, she walked leisurely round the room, dusting the ornaments with her pocket-handkerchief, and talking in the high-pitched voice which seemed habitual to her.

"Thank you, sir, you're very kind, but she must be kept up to the mark. Girls is always best kept up to the mark. And I'd heard tell, sir, as you'd been accustomed to have things clean and particular, and the dusting properly attended to, which every gentleman has a right to, and I don't mean as you shall have any occasion to complain of the same while you're in my apartments. For we wrote, sir, did me and my husband, to the reference in London which you mentioned to us. No offense, sir, I hope," added Mrs Mallinson, in a bustle, seeing that Hugh drew himself up with a little accession of dignity at the mention of this word reference; "but, you see, there's so much imposition nowadays, especially in a place like Oresbridge, where people is always coming and going, and you can never tell what they are, nor where they come from, nor what they mean to do, unless you get a character from some one you can trust to, particular if it's going to be for a continuance, as I hope, sir, you'll find it convenient to be, so long as it's agreeable to both parties. And he told us, did the gentleman, as you were every thing that could be wished, and regular of a night, and to be depended upon for the rent because of the salary coming in quarterly, which I am glad of, both on your account, and me and my husband's, for long bills is what I never could bear. And it's a good business, too, is the iron, and one as a young man can make almost any thing of, as I tell Sarah Matilda, when she talks of settling with somebody in the law, or something of that sort. I always say there's nothing like trade, especially the iron trade, and she couldn't please me better than to make up her mind to it.

"And the other, sir, will be healthful for you in a manner," continued Mrs. Mallinson. "I mean the managing for Mr. Lyneton, for he told us, did your uncle, as you would be out there on Saturday afternoons, so as we could use the room ourselves if we'd a mind to, which was very polite of him, me and my husband thought."

"Very, indeed," thought Hugh also. "Almost too much so." And he pictured Sarah Matilda entertaining her friends among his books and papers. However, he said nothing, only mentally resolved to take care of his keys; and Mrs. Mallinson went on—

"Though I don't suppose it will bring you much in, sir. They're dreadfully poor, is the Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots—can't scarce hold themselves together, and the estate is dropping to pieces as fast as it knows how. Some folks says he's lived a gay life, has the master, for all he looks so stiff and stern, and has done a deal of gaming, and that sort of thing, in his time, though you wouldn't think it to look at him, for he's as grave as a judge now, and has been ever since I can tell of him. But it may be all people's talk; some people says any thing, and never trouble themselves whether it's true or not. But I will say this for them, as they're the proudest set of folks ever I heard tell of, partic'lar the eldest Miss, and bad for her, too, for pride and poverty don't draw well together, nor ever did. And if she don't look to it, she'll find herself left with nothing else to live upon but her pedigree; and I'm thinking that'll be a poor living, although folks do say it's the finest pedigree in all this part of the country."

"When *will* the woman go away!" thought Hugh; and still he had a sort of interest in listening to these little facts about the Lyneton Abbots people, though as yet they did not promise much for any satisfaction he should have in social intercourse with the family. His mother need not surely have been so particular in wishing him to make a favorable impression, if this was the nature of the material he had to work upon.

"No, sir; it don't get folks a living, doesn't a pedigree, and the sort of pride as goes with it is agen' the Scripters, as forbids us to think better of ourselves than we ought to think; and

it isn't aught of that sort commends us to the Almighty, but only a meek and quiet spirit, and not to speak evil of nobody, and using our best endeavors to support the cause among us, which I'm sure me and my husband has always been accustomed to do, specially since we joined ourselves to the new body, and felt it our duty to be burning and shining lights to it, as me and my husband does, though I say it myself.

"And that was what I was going to tell you, sir," continued Mrs. Mallinson, "before I saw the crumbs, which gave me a contrary turn, and Betsy shall hear about them as soon as ever I go down stairs, for girls are always best kept up to the mark; there's nothing like keeping girls up to the mark, and making them feel it, if they don't do things proper. I was going to tell you, sir, that we belong to the new body, does my husband and me. We went off a good bit past, when the split, which you've most likely heard about, took place in Park Street. It was mostly along of my husband that we raised a split here. You see, he's a man, is my husband, that don't do to be put upon, nor naught of that sort, and the old body was getting too strict, and the minister wanted overmuch power, and we that held the purse-strings wasn't agreeable that he should have no more than what he had got; and plenty, too, for it don't stand to reason that a congregation should pay the money, and then have no say over the party as they pay it to; and if the Scripters does say that the laborer is worthy of his hire, they don't say that he's to do just as he's a mind to, and never be kept up to the mark. And when things had got to such a pass as we didn't think they ought to go no further, my husband set himself to make a stand, and he wouldn't give in—no, that he wouldn't—and so we made a split of it, which was what my husband had had his mind set upon all along; and now we've a cause risen up, and a chapel as we've just had a bazar for before you come, and a minister as me and my husband does the supporting of him, which is expensive, if we didn't do it because of our duty as professing people, and it being laid upon us in the Scripters to be burning and shining lights, even to seven pound ten a quarter, if it can't be done for less, which Mr. Mallinson doesn't find it can, and him looked up to as such a leading man in the cause, and always takes the chair, and puts gold in the plate, because of its being a public situation, and people expecting it of him."

Mrs. Mallinson paused to take breath, and Hugh availed himself of this temporary lull to inquire what time the post closed for the south, hoping thereby to intimate to his voluble landlady that a little quiet would be desirable. But Mrs. Mallinson did not often have such a fine chance for an exposition of her views on Church government, and she was determined to improve it to the utmost. And so, after having told poor Hugh that the south mail had closed an hour ago, and that the Jersey letters would go out no more until ten o'clock next morning, she set off again with renewed speed upon the old track.

"But it's a sense of duty, sir, that's what it is, and a proper pride that the old body shouldn't be let to triumph over us, which they would if me and my husband didn't come forward with gold, same as their members isn't in a position to do. And I'm opening out to you in this way, sir, because I didn't know but what your sympathies might be along with the split. There's many a one goes with us in secret, as is restrained by the fear of man from an open expression, and the new cause being expensive to keep up; but their views is in our direction all the same, and I'm sure, sir, if it was any thing of that sort in your case, me and my husband wouldn't object your having a seat in our pew without any mention of rent at the present, which is five shillings a quarter, and making you welcome down stairs when the minister comes. And it's pretty often he does come, too, though whether it's on account of Sarah Matilda I can't say, for there's been nothing but friendliness yet, and I never could see my way quite clear to her being a minister's wife, specially in a new cause like the split that we've raised in Park Street, which, as one may say, hasn't got itself fairly started yet, though I don't doubt but what it will lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes, and get a better place of worship and a minister of its own, and every thing that's proper, and be flourishing like a green bay-tree when the old chapel's done its work, as some of the leading men among us says it has at the present time, the increase of members last year being only an expiring effort, and not such a percentage as ours, when all is said and done. You see, sir, we're told in the Scripters that one is set up and another put down, and that's the way with every thing in this world, as our young minister said when he came to tea yesterday, and there's a cross for every body to bear, when I was giving him my views about his sermon last Sunday, it not being so clear in its doctrines as me and my husband could have wished.

"And now, sir, if you would like to hear Sarah Matilda at her music, I'm sure she'll be proud to favor you with any thing you've a mind to ask for," said Mrs. Mallinson, holding the door open with the evident expectation that Hugh would follow her down stairs into the back parlor, and ask for a renewal of the dulcet strains which had been winging their upward flight, in company with the odor of new bread and smoked bacon, for the last hour.

But Mr. Deeping very wisely asked for nothing but his candle, and having got it, he went to bed, first, however, wishing Mrs. Mallinson a courteous good-night, which that lady returned with hearty good-will, and then went back again to the parlor, sniffing as she went in an unusually satisfied manner.

Doubtless there would be more luggage to come, and she liked young men who kept good hours at night. It was the commencement of all sorts of success in the world, for a young man to keep good hours at night.

CHAPTER XIII.

Hugh Deeping went to bed that night weary and discontented, out of love with himself and his new life, and every thing belonging to it. Only one sweet thought nestled in his heart, and that was the thought of his mother and sister, for whom he was willing to suffer much, if he could but make their home pleasanter, if he could but save from the need of daily toil those who had already denied themselves so much for him. And the thought that they were remembering and praying for him, was the last that floated dream-like through his mind before sleep and forgetfulness came.

He was awakened next morning by the taking down of shutters from the shop windows, a work which the apprentice-boy performed with much needless clatter and confusion. Hugh opened his eyes, expecting to see the pretty white muslin curtains which shaded his room in the little cottage at Jersey, and beyond them the reddening leaves of the Virginian creeper which covered that end of the house. But instead he only saw the green and black bars of an imitation Venetian blind, done in glazed calico, through which the dim light, struggling in, revealed a very smart colored paper, and a suit of furniture, painted in far-off—very far-off—imitation of maple, and an imitation marble chimney-piece, on which stood a pair of imitation Parian busts of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, with a large piece of fused cinder, not imitation, from one of the Oresbridge furnaces.

The piece of cinder recalled him to a sense of his situation. He remembered where he was; that this cold, yellow sunshine, which was doing its best to expose the imitation paint and marble of his new lodging, had labored with painful loss of its original purity, through the smoke and vapor of the great town of Oresbridge, the centre of the iron-working district, and that all this whistling, and shouting, and screaming of milk girls, and hooting of dustmen, came from the streets of that same great town of Oresbridge, the town which was to be his home for many months, perhaps many years, perhaps all his life.

He remembered, too, that this very day, instead of studying those old Greek poets whose noble thoughts had stirred within him, in days gone by, such dreams of future honor and renown, he must go and bow respecfully to his new master, and stand hat in hand while his work was explained to him. And be cooped up in a dingy little counting-house, amid the din of hammers, and the hot breath of smelting-furnaces, within hearing, perhaps, of many a rude gibe and oath from the Oresbridge workmen, whose fame in that respect had reached even down to the quiet little cottage in Jersey.

And from that dingy counting-house his only change would be to another, perhaps equally dingy, though in the midst of pleasanter surroundings, where, under the dictatorship of a stiff old country squire, not purse-proud, certainly—for, if Mrs. Mallinson's information was correct, the Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots were as poor as church mice—but pedigree-proud, which was just as bad, he would have to plod through estimates, and balance-sheets, and specifications, and arrears of bad debts. And then, perhaps, as part of his weekly occupation on the estate, he would be expected to go in the character of bailiff to the poverty-stricken cottagers, and worm out of them, by hard words, and threats of jail or workhouse, the painfully earned rent, which, after all, would go such a very little way toward mending the Squire's failing fortunes—fortunes diminished, most likely, by gaming, or fast living, or other kinds of needless extravagance. Not much prospect of social intercourse there; not much need for kid gloves, and extra-fine collars, and careful attention to his personal appearance. For if Mrs. Mallinson said truly, the most that he was likely to get from the Lyneton Abbots people was a mean salary and supercilious neglect.

This was the picture which presented itself to Hugh Deeping's mental vision as the shop-boy's clatter roused him from his morning's sleep. Only this, never any thing more than this, unless the iron business proved a success, and after long, patient plodding at the counting-house drudgery, he got an advance of salary, or a confidential post near the manager, or perhaps—which was the summit of his uncle's ambition for him—he was admitted to a small share in the concern, a very junior partnership, involving much of the trouble, and very little of the profits. And then farewell forever to the bright dreams of his youth, to the sweet seclusion of literary pursuits, or the not less sweet consciousness of power over the minds of other men—power to move, and sway, and rouse them by that eloquence which, he somehow felt, lay dormant within him, only waiting for circumstances to develop it. He could have been so great; he could have done so much. He could have made his mother and sister so proud of him, if only—

And he looked at the cold yellow sunlight coming in through the imitation Venetian blinds, and lighting up imitation maple furniture, and he heard the clinking of milk cans in the street, and just below him the everlasting creak of a new coffee-grinding machine, sending up a wearisome odor, which made him feel as if he would like to consign all the Mocha in the world, superfine and otherwise, to perdition.

Also, if he needed any thing more to remind him of his altered position, there was Mrs. Mallinson's voice, raised to its very highest pitch, just at the bottom of the stairs, administering to Betsy, who was at the top of the house, that threatened reprimand about the bread crumbs, and finding fault with her for not setting the new lodger's boots at his bedroom door first thing in the morning. What, Mrs. Mallinson said, did the girl think she was hired for, if somebody else had to seek after the lodger's boots, and attend to their being taken up in a morning; and what did she mean by leaving

the crumbs about in that way, just as if it wasn't her business to see them properly cleared; and if that was the way she meant to go on, the sooner they parted the better, for Mrs. Mallinson had not kept house for nearly thirty years without knowing what a maid-of-all-work's duty was; and so long as she was a mistress, she meant to have that duty done, yes, and well too; no leaving about of crumbs on *her* tea-tables, or slipping over of gentlemen's boots in a morning; that was a thing she never allowed, and never intended to allow, for if there was one thing more than another that she had always set her face against, it was slipperiness, and Betsy was to come down stairs that very instant, and see that Mr. Deeping's boots were properly cleaned and set outside his bedroom door, where Mrs. Mallinson expected they should be set every morning, so long as he remained in the apartments.

To which reprimand, with its

"Notes of linked sweetness long drawn out,"

Betsy, whose soul could also be roused within her upon occasion, answered at the extremest pitch of *her* voice, from the top of the garret stairs. She had never been hired to wait upon a lodger; no, that she hadn't, and she didn't mean to do it, no, that she didn't; and if it was for the finest gentleman in Oresbridge, she wasn't going to black any more boots than had been mentioned for the wages, no, that she wasn't. And she shouldn't be put upon, no, that she shouldn't, with an extra breakfast and tea which had never been agreed upon when she took the place; and if Mrs. Mallinson wasn't satisfied, she might suit herself with another maid that day month, for there were plenty of situations to be got, with better wage and less to do for it than a provision-dealer's shop where lodgers were took in, and saddled upon the maid-of-all-work without so much as saying "By your leave," which was a thing she wasn't going to put up with, no, that she wasn't, and so she should consider herself at liberty that day month.

Hugh Deeping listened to this fierce objurgatory warfare in profound disgust, as he arranged his collar before the cheap maple-framed looking-glass in front of the imitation Venetian blind. And, as if he had not had enough of her sweet voice, Mrs. Mallinson was in his sitting-room when he reached it, dusting the glass shade over Sarah Matilda's wax fruit, ready to bear down upon him with her pitiless cataract of talk.

But this time Mr. Deeping returned such short and manifestly uninterested answers, not even appearing to have heard that there was such a thing as a split in any of the Dissenting congregations of Oresbridge, still less acknowledging the remotest sympathy for, or the faintest desire to acquaint himself with, any of the merits and bearings of this particular split, that his landlady, after about a quarter of an hour's exposition of it, took up her duster and returned to the back parlor, sniffing as she went, but in by no means so approving a manner as on the previous evening. There was nothing she enjoyed so much as a good stiff uninterrupted dissertation on the origin, progress, merits and prospects of the split which her husband had been fortunate enough to accomplish among the members of the congregation worshiping in Park Street. Mr. Deeping had listened so attentively to the somewhat lengthy exposition of last night, and had so readily accepted the proposal of closing the subject then, to resume it at some future time, that she confidently reckoned upon him as a proselyte to the new cause, and quite looked forward to his occupation of the vacant seat in Mr. Mallinson's pew, at the Grosmont Road Chapel. No wonder, then, that she felt herself aggrieved by his curt replies this morning, and sniffed with vigorous dissatisfaction as she left him to that moody solitude which he was foolish enough to prefer to her able and eloquent setting forth of the peculiarities of the Oresbridge split.

If Mrs. Deeping and her daughter Mary could have looked in upon Hugh as he discussed his lonely breakfast in the cheap-fine sitting-room over Mr. Mallinson's shop, they might well have prayed for a more resigned spirit to take possession of him; for truly his face wore any thing but the dignified calm of a man who has learned in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content.

Three months is scarcely long enough for any one, especially a youth ardent of feeling and strong of impulse, to learn the lessons of trust and patience, or to think with other than bitter regret of a blow which has struck far away from him a life once full of hope and promise, and thrust him out into another, in which, whatever toil and effort he may put forth, will only lead to inglorious rest; to wealth, perhaps competence and ease, but never to that high vantage-ground of influence of which he had once so proudly dreamed.

Hugh Deeping's experience of life had not yet taught him his own weakness, nor, after bitter proof of that weakness, led him out of himself to seek the strength in which alone any true man can conquer and go bravely on. He had yet to learn that life's best purpose may be reached, its noblest ends fulfilled, as well through the common beaten track of rough endeavor and honest toil, as through the sheltered path of studious leisure along which he had once sought to tread. He was just in that vexing transition state which seldom comes more than once in a life-time, when a man's powers, and the work to which those powers must needs be bent, appear sadly at variance. The immovable finger-post of duty pointed him right on to a course where as yet he could see only briers and thorns. Inclination, ever so much pleasanter than duty, beckoned him onward where no thorns sprang up, and where no vexing briers would hinder his speedy reach of that shining goal which duty did not so much as suffer him to behold.

Three months ago Hugh Deeping's life lay

clearly before him. He knew well enough what he was going to do. He had but to work on, gather up rich store of learning, and then come forth from his seclusion to use the power which this would give him over others. No rude toil in that life; no rough battling with natures coarser than his own; no shutting up of his higher life, while what he was pleased to think the common one did its humble task-work. Now all this was changed. Two rooms over a provision-dealer's shop, in a second-rate street, in a smoky manufacturing town, where he must bring himself down to the level of people whose ideas never travelled beyond their own little Shibboleth of sectarianism; a dingy counting-house among smelting-furnaces, bellows and hammers, where he must chronicle the rise and fall of iron, and the amount of fuel which those same insatiable furnaces dragged down day by day into their fiery jaws; the incoming of pigs of metal, and their outgoing in some other form; where he must dole out workmen's wages, and add up columns of figures from dawn to sunset, day after day, week after week, year after year, with such scant patience as he could gather together for the doing of it. This was the life he must lead now.

And Hugh Deeping, in his young, hot-headed discontent, would have laughed to scorn any one who ventured to tell him that such a life as that could ever be made a noble or a worthy or a beautiful thing.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was on the afternoon of his first Saturday at Oresbridge that Mrs. Mallinson's lodger set out to Lyneton Abbots, to present himself to his employer there in the character of bailiff, secretary, steward, clerk, or whatever else that stiff, stern old country squire, of whose antecedents and present position Mrs. Mallinson had given him so unfavorable an impression, might choose to call him.

He had already taken a brief introductory survey of the scene of his future labors. A week ago he had made his bow to Mr. Feverige, junior partner in the Bellona iron works; a tall, spare man, who looked as if he had absorbed the surplus iron of the concern into his own composition, so very metallic was his whole aspect and bearing. He received Hugh kindly, though, promising before long to take him over the works and explain to him the progress of manufacturing. But the first morning, he said, must be devoted to business; there was nothing, he said, like getting an insight into the business first thing, and he had come down earlier than usual that morning to show him the books, and give him an idea of what would be expected from him. And so he conducted his young accountant through what seemed to Hugh very like a section of the nether regions, across vast sheds floored with planks of sheet-iron, where half-clad, Titanic-looking men, with iron-sandaled feet, were dragging about after them writhing fiery serpents of red-hot metal; and past furnaces before whose blazing mouths other men with visors over their faces were standing, kneading, stirring, and puddling huge masses of molten ore, then forking it out and rushing away with it over the clanking floors to rollers, which flattened it into boiler-plates. Passing these, they came to a counting-house, about the size of a railway signal-man's box, delightfully situated between a couple of steam-worked hammers, which were going from morning to night with clock-like regularity, sending out at every stroke a shower of golden sparks from the burning metal which they were torturing into shape and firmness.

Here Hugh was shown the work to which he was to devote the remainder of his life; columns of figures drawn up in Macedonian phalanx, and seemingly as unconquerable; balance-sheets, bills of sale, tables of workmen's wages, price-lists, estimates and invoices. A pleasant contrast, truly, to Æschylus and Euripides, or the fine theories and subtle speculations of the German philosophers. But much more productive, too, as many a princely fortune, hoarded by men who had begun life in such a little counting-house as that in which Hugh was to labor, might testify. Greek poetry and German philosophy might be very well in their way, but for success in the world there was nothing like iron.

In the same little counting-house Hugh had worked five long weary days, quite long enough to deepen his distaste into dislike, and his dislike into disgust. Five long days, and never a breath of fresh air, never a gleam of any other sunshine than that which crept so feebly in between the chinks of those iron-roofed sheds in the Bellona works, or struggled down through Oresbridge murk and smoke into his tawdry sitting-room in the Grosmont Road. For they kept long hours at the Bellona works, from nine o'clock in the morning until six in the evening, with an hour in the middle of the day for dinner; that was Hugh's stint of labor, and dreary enough he found it.

So he was glad of a change, though it might only be from bad to worse, from the grave, patronizing civility of the metallic Mr. Feverige to the proud reserve of the Squire of Lyneton Abbots, who would doubtless, as Mrs. Mallinson had hinted, make him feel plainly enough that he was but an underling, a little better perhaps than the coachman or the footman, but only, like them, a machine for doing needful task-work. Still, he would at any rate get a walk into the country, and that, in the sunny October-time, was worth something.

So on this Saturday afternoon, after washing away the smuts, of which he always brought home a liberal supply from the Bellona works, he donned his best suit and extra-fine collar and black kid gloves, and tried to make himself look as much like a gentleman as he could, before setting off to his new sphere of duty.

To tell the truth, it was no easy matter to make Hugh Deeping look like a gentleman, such a gentleman, at least, as one sees in a tailor's fashion-sheets, or the dress-boxes of a provincial theatre. For however well his coats were cut, they never seemed to fit him properly, because of an awkward way he had of carrying himself; not a stoop exactly, but a careless swing of the shoulders, learned, most likely, by walking up and down those college avenues with both hands in his pockets, as he so often used to walk with his fellow-students when they were getting their subjects ready for the debating society. And his hair did not sprout out in nice glossy little curls from under the brim of his hat, as it might have done if he had trained it properly, with much expense of time and pomatum—given his mind to it, as some people do. And he had a style of walking peculiar to himself, so that in dry weather his boots were always covered with dust, and if the roads chanced to be wet, they became a shapeless conglomerate of mud. And just now, too, the disappointment which he was cherishing with so much care had graven a dark frown across his usually open face, and made him thrust his hands into his pockets, with an air of defiance which might do well enough for stage purposes, but which was not at all pleasant nor attractive for every-day use on a genteel country road. So that when Sarah Matilda stood at one of the front windows, watching him down the street on his way to Lyneton Abbots, she was more than half correct in remarking to Mrs. Mallinson—

"He doesn't look a bit like a gentleman, Ma, and I'm sure I don't think I shall ever be able to fancy him."

It was a warm genial afternoon in early October. The golden sunlight, which had such hard work to struggle through Oresbridge smoke, came down broadly enough on the great oak-trees of the Lyneton Abbots road. It flushed into brighter tints the brown and yellow leaves which yet lingered on the fast-thinning brambles, and shone through the crimson maples, lighting up into coral-like brilliance their red ripe clusters of berries. And many a miniature forest of fern and bracken grew upon the sloping banks, shadowing, for those who chose to seek them, little green cushions of moss and tiny wild geraniums and pale primula leaves, which had crept there for shelter from summer's glaring heat.

And over the distant country-side there brooded that soft gray haze which comes with early autumn-time; a pearly veil through which could just be seen the outline of the hills lying far away westward beyond Lyneton Abbots. A still, pleasant, dreamy afternoon it was, such as the year lets fall sometimes as she goes away, a stray gleaning dropped from the overfull sheaf of Autumn which she is carrying into Time's great garner.

Hugh Deeping's nature was strangely susceptible to passing influences. As much as *most women, and far more than the generality* of men, he was the creature of circumstances. His best friends could not always tell in what mood they would find him. A gloomy day, a harsh, unkind word, a smoky chimney, an unexpected twinge of headache, would change for him the whole aspect of the outer world, darkening his horizon, crushing the spirit out of him, and making him feel as if life were scarcely worth the having. And as he was easily depressed, so as easily, by a pleasant change in the aspects of things, could he be led back again to the olden brightness, which was after all the prevailing bent of his mind.

And so that irritable impatience which already had him under its sway when he got within reach of Mrs. Mallinson's interminable orations, and which only changed to gloomy discontent or hopeless despondency when he contemplated his prospects at the Bellona iron works, cleared away before this golden afternoon sunshine, like the mist which only eight little hours ago had shrouded that landscape, now so warm and bright, in one unbroken pall of gloom. He began to feel as if there was some brightness left in the world, after all; as if every thing and every body were not quite leagued in enmity against him. A little of the old springiness came back, the joyous overflow of life which used to make him such a merry companion in those pleasant college days. He felt young again. He wanted to pull off his coat, to toss his cap up in the air, to frisk like a boy among those fallen leaves over which the sunshine crept in such golden blinks, to play leap-frog over the old stumps by the roadside, any thing to work off a little of the vitality which had been pent up so long. And when, about a mile from Lyneton Abbots, he came to a gnarled oak-tree, whose rugged branches stretched half-way across the road, this impulse could no longer be resisted. He climbed, school-boy fashion, up to its very top, got a splendid view of the surrounding country, filled his pockets with acorns, and only discovered when he reached the ground again that his black kids were ruined for the remaining term of their existence, his glossy wristbands marked with many a green lichen stain from the oak branches, and his "Persigny" tie, which only an hour ago he had taken such pains to "do up" into a proper bow before Mrs. Mallinson's looking-glass, hanging in a long straight ribbon over his shoulder.

But Hugh had never yet been deeply concerned about the appearance of his outer man. He knotted up the luckless Persigny as well as he could by guess, purposing to take a leisurely survey of it in the next brook he passed. Then, pushing his soiled wristbands out of sight, smoothing his hat with his coat-sleeve, and giving himself a general setting-to-rights shake, he went on his way, thankful that things were no worse.

Soon he came in sight of the village. One by one its cottage chimneys peered out among the bushes, sending forth little curls of blu

smoke, which told of Saturday cooking going on within. Then he neared the village green, where a party of pinafored urchins were performing gymnastic exercises upon the stocks, and another party, of more advanced notions, had got up a game of cricket, with wooden splinters for bats, and a few long dry sticks from the nearest copse for wicket stumps. Hugh could willingly have taken sides with them, and got a few notches, just for the sake of bringing back the old school-boy feeling, but it was now half-past two, and at three he was to meet Mr. Lyneton. So he contented himself with merely standing by for a few minutes and watching them, greatly to the delight of their youthful vanity, and then he went across the green to the church-yard, beyond which they told him he would find the Manor House.

He felt such a bright, joyous sense of freedom there in that quiet village, away from the din and smoke of Oresbridge, out of hearing of Mrs. Mallinson's incessant patter-patter, and Sarah Matilda's sentimental ballads, and the everlasting grind of the coffee-machine. Away, too, from the Bellona iron work, with its belching furnaces, and clouds of smuts, and showers of red-hot sparks, and visored puddlers forking out the huge clods of half-molten ore. It seemed months, and not just a few short days, since Mr. Feverige had piloted him for the first time through that Tophet of a place, and showed him into the little signal-man's box between the great hammers, where he was to spend eight hours of every day in looking over and keeping accounts. Indeed, that might have been a dream, nothing more than a dream, except that by just putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket he could feel the card which Mr. Feverige had given him on the first morning of his attendance, a very neat lithographed card, with a picture at the top representing the vast sheds, and tall chimneys, and blazing furnaces of the Bellona iron work. And on the back of the card was a memorandum, which he had jotted down only a few hours before, to remind him that on the following Monday Mr. Sparkes, the senior partner, would be down at the counting-house to look over his work. That was no dream, but sober, certain reality.

He crossed the church-yard, where a few moss-covered grave-stones were peering out from beneath the fallen chestnut-leaves, and opening a little gate under the yew-trees on the further side of it, he found himself in a narrow, grass-grown foot-path, directly opposite a second gateway, whose crumbling stone griffins, quaint and defiant as when, three hundred years ago, they were first placed there, kept watch and ward over the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

CHAPTER XV.

The place had a certain faded beauty of its own, as of some aged face which has kept, through all the toil and rack of life, some sweet memory of its youth, some faint trace in form and feature of the long-ago happy past. The sunshine lay softly enough upon it now, pencilling the shadows of the ivy-leaves upon the dormer-windows, and flushing the russet-brown lichens which darkened its stone facings and terraces. Like jets of crimson rain, the fuchsias showered down their blossoms upon the vine that trailed its heavily-laden branches along that mouldering wall; the old vine that still gave such purple wealth of fruit, though many and many a year had gnarled its old trunk, and knotted the hardy stems that were now borne down to the ground, like other more precious things than they, by the very bounteousness of the gifts which they reached forth.

And slowly as afternoon sunlight deepened into the amber glow of early evening, the shadow crept round upon the old sun-dial, crept over quaint, cabalistic figures and hoary legends, scarcely any longer to be read, for the stain which centuries had breathed upon them. And the three stone dolphins under the fountain basin opened wide their gaping mouths, from which the green moss hung down in long festoons, dripping with crystals of dew; for in that sheltered corner of the garden, beneath shadow of laurel and holly, the late autumn sunshine never came.

Hugh Deeping had read of old English homesteads like this, but he had never seen one in all its fair decaying picturesqueness. He stood for a long time by the gate-way, ankle deep in the dry leaves which had fallen from the elm-trees by the garden wall; and even as he stood, others kept silently falling, falling round him. He wondered what the story of the old place might be, what memories belonged to it, what life it could be that was lived so quietly and apart in a home whose memories must reach so far back.

Surely a gentle life, not vexed, as Mrs. Mallinson said it was, by pride and paltry care. For though Time's autumn had touched those old walls even as Nature's had touched the trees which sheltered them, there was still such an air of genial friendliness about them, a sort of silent, unspoken welcome, as though the spirits of the old Lyneton people, the noble, high-born, generous old Lyneton people, who had lived so blameless a life there, and in generations past dispensed the hospitalities of the place with so free a hand, lingered round it still.

The window of the oriel-room was open, and Hugh could hear a sound of music and singing—a sweet, low voice, like his sister's. Was it Miss Lyneton's? Surely not; a voice so sweet could never belong to one so cold and proud as Mrs. Mallinson had described her. As he listened, he fancied he saw some one come to the window; and then remembering that, to say the least of it, it was rather ungentlemanly to be standing there in broad day-light, taking a survey of the place in such a leisurely fashion, he pushed open the rusty iron gate, bringing down upon himself thereby a fresh shower of brown leaves from the elm-trees, and came forward.

Rather an unpleasant thing that coming forward. Hugh would much sooner have lingered in the shadow of those defiant-looking stone griffins, taking in the picturesqueness of the general effect, watching the slant sunshine as it stole past moss and lichen along the garden wall, and flickered in and out among the broad vine-leaves, than have gone boldly up to the old door-way, under the eyes of Abbot Siward himself, and lifted the heavy brazen knocker, whose fall must waken such a resonant echo through the dim, quiet place. However, that brazen knocker must be raised, and the slumbering echoes wakened, and Hugh did both with an unaccustomed tremor of expectation.

A gray-headed old serving-man, who looked as antique and stately as the house itself, came to the door, and ushered him into a black-oak wainscoted library, lined with books in very worn, faded backs, and having a mingled odor of Russia leather and Autumn leaves. The room was unoccupied, save by a great Newfoundland dog, also very old and grisled, who stood on a tiger-skin hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, eyeing the new-comer with dignified reserve, conscious that since the said new-comer had been ushered into that apartment, he was of sufficient importance to be treated with respect, though not admitted to the familiar intercourse of an acquaintance.

The music ceased. There was a rustle as of silken raiment across the matted hall, and then Hugh Deeping was aware of the presence of a lady, whose quiet bearing and easy, self-possessed manner proclaimed her to be the mistress of the house, none other than Miss Lyneton, of Lyneton Abbots.

Hugh bowed low, much lower than he was in the habit of bowing even to ladies. He had pictured to himself a cramped-up spinster, erect, rigid, stiff as the stone griffins who kept guard over her ancestral home, fronting him with an aspect of chilly Norman dignity, speaking to him, if indeed she condescended to speak at all, in a voice out of which pride had long ago quenched all the sweetness. Instead, there stood before him a lady of gentle presence, from whom the spring and buoyancy of early girlhood only seemed to have passed away, because they could never have comported quite easily with that meek gravity which sat as naturally upon Gwendoline Lyneton as her diadem upon the born queen. Not "amiable-looking" exactly; for those dark gray eyes which gazed so calmly upon him from beneath their level brows had too much firmness and decision in their glance, and the faultless curves of lip and nostril told of will too strong for amiability. But whatever of these spoke out in face and gesture, none had leave to spoil her manner, only to scatter over it that almost imperceptible frost of reserve, which, though it was very distinguished, had always shut out the Lyneton people from much popularity, even among those in their own rank of life.

She had only come in to excuse her brother, who was writing a letter of importance in the next room. If Mr. Deeping would be kind enough to wait a few minutes, Mr. Lyneton would join him. And then, drawing out for his amusement a portfolio of rare old engravings, and again regretting that he should be kept waiting, Miss Lyneton bowed slightly to the young man, and left the room. By and by he heard music again, a voice which he could well believe to be hers now, singing some of the solo parts from one of Mozart's Masses. How different, sitting in the old black-oak wainscoted library at Lyneton Abbots, listening to *that* music, and sitting in the shabby, cheap-fine drawing-room over the provision-dealer's shop, hearing Sarah Matilda's wearisome performances!

Hugh was in no mood just then for looking over rare prints. However, he could appreciate the thoughtful care for his comfort which had made Miss Lyneton take the trouble of bringing them out, and, still more, he could appreciate the perfect courtesy with which he had been treated.

Scarcely more than a dozen words had been spoken between them, yet he felt already that he was received as no servant or underling, but as a man, and a gentleman too, with a frank yet grave respect, which generously took for granted his worthiness of all that it gave. Very different this from the cold supercilious contempt which he had been led to expect, or even the measured, patronizing politeness with which, considering his altered position, he could have been content, receiving it from people who in social rank, if not in real worth and refinement, were in advance of himself. Had he been one of the oldest of the old nobility, with a pedigree as long and untarnished as her own, Miss Lyneton could not have treated him with more gentle stateliness.

Hugh liked it. Not that he was vain or conceited, but just because it made him feel like a man. Already he felt himself warming and expanding under the genial influence of those few words, spoken so calmly, yet with such a frank recognition of his own rights as a gentleman. Mr. Feverige, civil and well-meaning though he might be, would never have apologized for keeping him waiting for an hour together in that dingy little counting-house, while he attended to a customer, or transacted some trifling business details. Nor did it even seem to enter into Mr. Sparkes's thoughts that his clerks could have any thing to do but to wait his pleasure, and be ready when he chose to give them audience. It was there, amid the smut and din of the Bellona iron works, and not here, in the courtly seclusion of Lyneton Abbots, that he was to be considered as a menial—a mere paid agent for the doing of daily task-work.

So thought Hugh Deeping as he turned over the portfolio of old engravings, now and then exchanging a friendly remark with the Newfoundland dog, who still remained on the tiger-skin rug, with his back to the fire, regarding the new-comer with a kind of distant toleration, as

one who had been properly introduced into the mansion, but was not yet to be considered as on a footing of permanent intimacy therein. Hugh did not know that, had he been the veriest threadbare vendor of pencils or quills, or broken-down professional, who had come to that house on a lawful and honorable errand, he would have been treated with the same grave, lofty courtesy. He had yet to learn that beneath all the urbanity of the Lyneton people there lay, like granite rock under the velvet turf of some fair mountain-side, that resistless, unconquerable pride of caste and descent which he, from that low-born standing-place of his, could never move or break —a pride over which any love or passion of his would spend itself as feebly, and do as little harm, as spray on the ocean rocks.

CHAPTER XVI.

HALF an hour later the master of Lyneton Abbots and his young clerk were deep in columns of figures and balance-sheets, which, if not so complicated as those which Hugh had to manage at the Bellona iron works, were much more hopeless as regarded a successful clearing up. The estate had sadly dwindled down during the times of the later Lynetons. Field after field, plantation after plantation, had been sold to meet the losses incurred by unfortunate speculations in the Oresbridge coal-mines, or to pay calls upon shares which had long ago ceased to yield even the scantiest dividend of profit. One mining company, in which he had inherited his father's responsibilities, still made, from time to time, its heavy claims upon poor Mr. Lyneton's scant resources, reducing to a very pitiful circumference those ancestral acres which once stretched for miles round the old home at Lyneton Abbots. Claims which Mr. Lyneton was too honorable to evade, even though to satisfy them should drive him, as seemed almost likely to be the case, from every foot of land which once he called his own.

The entire rent-roll of the estate now comprised but a few little farms, lying in the neighboring parishes, and about a dozen tumble-down tenements in the village of Lyneton Abbots, whose tenants, owing to the badness of the times, and the low rate of wages for some years past, had got into the habit of making a passover of rent-day. And as Mr. Lyneton was either too proud, or too kind-hearted, or too unbusiness-like to press his claims, the only tangible result of his Lyneton Abbots property was a considerable yearly tax paid to Government in the shape of inhabited house duty. So that unless the first and second Mrs. Lynetons had had fortunes of their own, neither the Squire's own prospects, nor those of his daughter, were very brilliant.

Hugh had a good talent for business, though as yet it had been but slightly cultivated. He soon found out that by a little personal supervision, and a more diligent system of management, the estate might be put into working order, and, at any rate, made to pay its own expenses, if not to yield a very sumptuous income. And when he found that his new employer, instead of being a hard, grasping man, wringing the poor people's rent out of them by force or threats, had erred only on the side of leniency, and stinted himself in his own expenditure rather than put them to grief for the sake of the few pounds which they had so hardly earned, he set himself with the more cheerful good-will to understand the whole working of the concern, and try, if possible, to bring it round into something like a remunerative condition. For Mr. Lyneton, spite of his university education and grand descent, was a wretched business man, as might easily be inferred from the estimates and balance-sheets which he brought out for Hugh's inspection. And a much richer estate than that of Lyneton Abbots might soon have been brought to ruin under such thriftless management as he exercised upon it. "It will last my time" evidently went far down into Graham Lyneton's character.

They were still busy over plans and accounts, when the library door was opened, and a young girl came in, singing as she came some fragment of an old Scotch song. A fair, pleasant-looking girl, not beautiful, nor with Miss Gwendoline Lyneton's height of stature and grace of mien, yet with a gentle face, and eyes which had a fearless innocence in their straightforward glance.

She had not expected to find any one in the room, for she stopped very suddenly in the midst of her pretty little ballad, and looked inquiringly, first at her father, and then at the stranger, who, sitting with his back to the door, and intent upon a plan of the estate, had not as yet seen her.

"You must go away, Jeanie," said Mr. Lyneton; "we are very busy—we can not have you here just now."

"Yes, papa, I am going directly. I did not know any one was here. I only came to fetch a book."

And with light, springing quickness, quite unliké her aunt's measured step, Jeanie tripped across to the library, to that corner where "Percy's Reliques," in faded morocco bindings, were ranged on one of the upper shelves.

Ranged just out of her reach too, for after making one or two vain attempts to get at them, she dragged out a pile of old folios, and was going to use them as steps, when Hugh Deeping came forward to her help.

"Can I get the book for you? Which is it that you want?"

Jeanie turned and looked him full in the face, this stranger whose voice she now heard for the first time; one of those quiet, inquiring looks which seem to ask and tell so much. Twenty years ago, straying by a burn-side in that bonnie little Highland glen close by her grandmother's house, Jean Wardour met Mr. Lyneton, and bending on him such a look as that, had won his grave, sad heart. How, he knew not; he only felt that it was gone. And after that, stern man though he was, strong and self-controlled, there

was no rest for him until the gentle Highland maiden was all his own. And what her mother did with such a look twenty years ago, never dreaming what she had done, Jeanie Lyneton did with the same look now; did it just as unconsciously too.

"Thank you. Please to get me that first volume of 'Percy's Reliques;' the one that has the ballad of the 'Nut-browne Mayde' in it, I mean."

Hugh reached it down for her, bringing to view as he did so what ought to have been a strip of glossy, snow-white linen, just gleaming from under the sleeve of his coat; but which, as ill-luck would have it, was then neither white nor glossy; stained instead with many a green streak of lichen from that gnarled old oak-tree on the Lyneton Abbots road — Hugh heartily wished now he had never been foolish enough to climb it—and resembling for smoothness nothing more than a sheet of writing-paper which has been crumpled up into a ball and then spread out again.

He was very vexed. He would have given almost any thing if he had not gone up to the top of that mouldy old tree, and filled his pockets with acorns, which he thought might be bulging them out now in an awkward fashion, drawing his coat into all sorts of seams and wrinkles. And then he wondered how the rest of his apparel had fared; whether that unfortunate Persigny tie was done up in any thing like Christian neatness, for he quite forgot to look at it in the brook; and whether his hair was tolerably neat, or whether, to use his mother's favorite simile, it looked as if it had been trailed through a brier-bush — questions which had never so much as entered his mind when Miss Lyneton, who was just as likely to notice such things as her niece, had come to meet him with so much stately courtesy. Perfectly needless questions too, since before Jeanie could possibly have had time to make any tour of investigation over the particulars of his toilet, he had placed the book in her hands, and with another bright look and smile she had hurried away, beginning as soon as she was out of the room again that old Scotch ballad, just at the place where she had left off a minute or two before.

Only a minute or two. And yet how much had been done in that little space of time. That one look of Jeanie Lyneton's, bright, innocent, guileless, would color all Hugh Deeping's life. The change it wrought might be a blessing or a bane; but once having met and read it, he could never, never go back to the old track any more, never be the gay, thoughtless, free-hearted youth he was when three hours ago he crushed the fallen autumn-leaves under his feet on Lyneton Abbots road.

CHAPTER XVII.

Soon after that it grew too dark to work any longer, and Mr. Lyneton would not have the lamps lighted; for he said Mr. Deeping had been working hard enough that day, and it was quite time he began to rest. Whatever else Mr. Lyneton might be unreasonable in, he was certainly not unreasonable in the stint of work which he exacted from those who served him. Hugh tried to fancy Mr. Feverige or Mr. Sparkes dismissing any of their hands, whether weary or otherwise, before the six o'clock bell rang, but the attempt was quite unsuccessful.

Mr. Lyneton fixed the time for his next visit, when they were to go together over the estate, and see what repairs were absolutely needful. Then he bade Hugh a courteous farewell, thanking him for the trouble he had taken, and the interest which he had shown in his work. Again Hugh thought that if he had been the most nobly-born gentleman in the county, he could not have received more courteous treatment. It was so different from the mechanical business-like way in which Mr. Feverige bore himself toward the clerks and upper-class workmen of his concern, considering them as so much material, out of which he was to get a stipulated amount of profit in return for stipulated wages. Never any meeting him on the common ground of man and man, still less gentleman and gentleman. He the moving-power of the great machine, they the wheels whose business was to turn round so many times an hour, and so many hours a day, that was the only relationship which metallic Mr. Feverige seemed to acknowledge between himself and the people who worked under him.

So Hugh Deeping's first afternoon at Lyneton Abbots came to a close. With a strange, new sense of life and gladness and manhood, he heard that massive door closed behind him, and found himself once more in the narrow, grassy road which led away to Oresbridge. Standing there behind the shadow of the stone griffins, unnoticed now in the thickening gloom of autumn evening, he could gaze his fill at the old homestead, which a few hours ago had been to him a name and nothing more; which now seemed to hold so much of his life.

A glow of warm fire-light poured through the oriel-window—for the house was too retired to need much envious shutting in of blinds or curtains—and revealed to him the little figure of Jeanie Lyneton, sitting in the broad low window-seat, her brown hair falling over the book upon her knee, "Percy's Reliques" most likely, which he had awhile ago reached down for her from that tall book-case. He knew that ballad of the 'Nut-brown Mayde' which she was reading over to herself now. He had read it many and many a time, wondering whether he could ever win a love like that which she gave; whether any one would ever care enough for him to share his life, if need be, in want and exile and privation. Were Englishwomen as true now as they were in the old simple days when that sweet ballad was written? Could they love so well and trust so faithfully, even through seeming scorn and coldness? And then the words came back to him, so beautiful in their nobleness:

"Sith I have here bene partynère
With you of joye and blysse,
I muste, alsoe, parte of your wo
Endure, as reason is.
Yet am I sure of one pleasure,
And, shortely, it is this:
That where ye be, it semeth, pardè,
I colde not fare amysse;
For, in my mynde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone."

And he looked away again past the old elm-trees to the oriel-window where Jeanie sat.

Little Jeanie, whose face, upturned to his for a single moment, had graven itself in his heart forever. He could recall that face now, with its clear, child-like brow and startled smile; the glance, so innocent and fearless, of the sunny blue eyes, yet with a shy doubtfulness lurking in their depths, eyes which told so much, but told it so differently from Miss Lyneton.

Unwillingly, and with many a lingering look cast back toward the oriel-window, which still poured out its flood of light into the deserted garden, Hugh Deeping turned away down the Oresbridge road. It was almost dark now, only gray twilight enough to outline the bare branches of the trees upon the murky sky; and eastward, beyond the town, the red glare of the furnaces shot up like tongues of flame, and then quivered back again, leaving all gloomy as before. The night was so still, that road so free from passing footfall, that he could hear, like the breaking of surf on some rocky shore, the far-off din of the great town, to whose thousands of busy, struggling people, darkness itself seemed to bring no rest. Day and night the tide of their life kept rolling on, with no pause for backward flow. And as he neared the town, and its confused murmur deepened into a distinct, many-voiced tumult, he could distinguish, for they were just upon the western outskirts of Oresbridge, the clang of the Bellona iron works, that Tophet of flame and toil, where even now a hundred brawny-armed men were breaking the sweet stillness of night with the stroke of their hammers, and the clash of their mailed feet upon the iron floors. Where he, too, must toil on day by day, through so many weary months, to earn for himself, and those who were in some sort dependent upon him, as much as might find them daily bread.

But what were the Bellona iron works to him, and what any toil and weariness which must daily vex him there, and what all the little jarring disagreeablenesses of that commonplace, vulgar home in the Grosmont Road, the interminable practicing of Sarah Matilda, the coarse familiarity of Mrs. Mallinson, from which he had only that morning turned away with scarcely concealed disgust—now that in the fair domains of fancy so sweet a palace opened to him its golden gates, and made him free of a new bright life, whose freedom and whose brightness no touch of theirs had any power to mar? He could bear it all now. He need no longer make a trouble of any of these things. He had the golden key of a paradise where they could never trouble him.

Hugh Deeping would not have gone back to Oresbridge with such pleasant thoughts as these, if he could have heard a dialogue which took place in that old oriel-room at Lyneton Abbots, even while he stood by the gate-way, watching the warm glow of fire-light wandering out into the October gloom. A dialogue so simple, that to take her part in it, Gwendoline scarce needed to lift her face from the initial letter which she was illuminating from a copy of one of the old Catholic missals.

"Aunt Gwendoline."

This was how Jeanie always addressed her father's sister. No one, save Mr. Lyneton, Miss Hildegarde, and that more than friend away upon the sultry plains of India, ever called Gwendoline by her Christian name alone.

"Aunt Gwendoline."

"Yes, Jeanie."

"Who is that gentleman who has been here this afternoon?"

"You mean Mr. Deeping. He is a young man who is coming once a week to help your papa in the management of the estate."

"Yes, I know that well enough," and Jeanie changed her place to the other side of the oriel window, that the fire-light might fall more clearly on the book she was reading. Not reading it very carefully, though, for she often stopped to give a kind word or a pat to Rollo, who had come in out of the library, and was now lying at her feet, with his brown muzzle thrust into her little hand. Hugh Deeping, standing there behind the shadow of the stone griffins, unnoticed in the deepening gloom of evening, saw Jeanie change to the other side of the window, and was glad, for the fire-light, sweeping over her, gave him a better sight of the graceful bending figure. He could even distinguish the white little hand uplifted now and then to play with Rollo's shaggy coat, and the gleam of brown falling hair, that rippled back with many a wave and curl from the fair open face. A pleasant picture to look upon, though he did not know that any of Jeanie's thoughts were for him just then.

"Yes, papa told me after he had gone that he was coming on Saturday afternoons to look over accounts; but I mean, what is he, and where does he come from?"

Gwendoline took another film of the gold leaf with which she was filling in the background of her initial letter, fixed it carefully on the paper, and dusted away the shining fragments before she replied—

"I really can not tell you much about him, except that his references gave him a very satisfactory character for steadiness and ability; and Graham says, too, that he seems to have plenty of energy. He is clerk in one of the iron works at Oresbridge, and he has an uncle who keeps a haberdasher's shop somewhere in London. That is all I know about him."

And though the words were spoken quietly enough, yet the hard granite of the rock beneath—the rock of the old Lyneton pride—came up through all the ringing clearness of their tones. Hugh Deeping might dream what dreams he

chose, and weave what web of hope seemed fairest across the untouched future; but those dreams would be very empty, and that web of hope would only stretch itself out to be swept away like gossamer films, which sparkle so brightly for an hour or two in autumn morning sunlight, and then disappear. For as long as Gwendoline Lyneton kept that proud spirit of hers, and held so fast the ancient honor of her line, Jeanie's hand would never lie in his, nor her gentle life link itself with fortunes of one so lowly born as he.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Hugh did not hurry over that walk from Lyneton Abbots to Oresbridge. The new hopes and purposes which thronged around him as he trod—thoughtfully enough now—the fallen leaves, and watched the stars creep out one by one over the old house by the church-yard, Jeanie's home, were far too precious to be exchanged sooner than needful for the dim, faded life which would close around him as soon as he got back again to his old quarters, over the provision-dealer's shop. While he could, he would linger over them undisturbed, thinking them into a happier brightness, or if turning away from them at all, only turning away to the sweet memory which was yet so fresh, which would always be for him now the starting-point of his life; all behind that—joy, sorrow, whatever it might be—quite vague and dim. For what Hugh Deeping did, he did with his whole heart. When disappointment came, he had entirely bowed under it, seeing no way of escape, no possible brighter days in store for him. Now that hope had come, it took full possession of him, too. He yielded himself entirely to its new, sweet influence. He never stayed to think that this also might pass from him, even as the black cloud of disappointment had passed.

So the evening was far spent before he found his way back again to Grosmont Road. Mr. Mallinson's shop was brilliantly illuminated, this being Saturday night, a season of unusual activity behind the counter. Whole phalanxes of fancy-biscuit tins, red-lettered, and bearing the imposing devices of their respective manufacturers, shone resplendent from their exalted station upon the top shelves, more resplendent still by contrast with the canvas-shrouded Westphalia hams, and dun-colored sides of bacon, and colums of cheeses, which occupied the less conspicuous parts of the premises, side by side with apoplectic-looking barrels of flour, and barricades of bread-loaves just fresh from the bakery behind Mrs. Mallinson's back sitting-room. As for the window, newly arranged that morning, it presented an appearance which must have filled Mrs. Green's mind with the bitterest sensations of envy, if, as was most likely the case, poor thing! she had little to do but to stand behind her coffee canisters and criticise it. For a row of gas-lights poured down their reflected brilliance upon a very fairy-land—so Mrs. Mallinson expressed it herself—of biscuit, crumpets, rusks, cakes of all shapes, makes, and devices, labelled according to their respective degrees of excellence, and almost asking to be tasted by the little boys who, with wide-opened mouths and vehement exclamations of desire, were loitering round about.

Mr. Mallinson was frisking from side to side of his shop with brisk activity, now exchanging remarks on the weather and the price of provisions, with some thrifty housewife whose weekly supply of flour he was weighing out; anon breaking off to administer a sharp rebuke to the apprentice-boy, who, not having any immediate interest in the profits of the concern, did not look after customers with quite so much alacrity; then resuming, with marvellous alteration of tone, his remarks on the superior quality of the flour this season, or the very cheap rate at which, owing to a fortunate speculation in the bacon-market, he could supply the best Yorkshire cured.

"Fine night, sir, glasses looking up," was all the flour-dealer found time to say, as Hugh passed through the little narrow door which led out of the shop to the passage and staircase. Mrs. Mallinson had graciously invited her lodger to "make himself free of the shop whenever he had a mind to," a very sensible invitation, since it saved Betsy the trouble of "answering" the front door more frequently than was absolutely necessary.

The old sounds greeted him as he went up to his own room. Mrs. Mallinson's high-pitched voice rolled forth its ceaseless volume of talk, broken now and then by that resonant sniff of hers which conveyed such force of expression for approval, or the contrary, according to circumstances. Occasionally, however, Sarah Matilda's scarcely less exalted treble interrupted the current of Mrs. Mallinson's eloquence; and at rare intervals the graver tones of a masculine voice varied the soprano duet, always, however, borne down, before it had said more than half a dozen words, by the overmastering accents of the female head of the establishment. Canton House must surely be having company to tea in the back parlor this evening.

And such, indeed, proved to be the case. For scarcely had Hugh taken off his boots, and straightened out his black kid gloves, sadly marred, alas! by their journey up the old oak-tree on the Lyneton Abbots road, and spread himself at full length in the slippery easy-chair, intending to spend the rest of the evening in castle-building, instead of taking out his pocket Homer, and reading a few books of that, as he promised himself before going to Mr. Lyneton's—when Mrs. Mallinson bustled in, somewhat more gayly attired than was her wont, for a cluster of very astonishing scarlet fuchsias dangled from her black lace cap, and a violent-patterned collar, with a scarlet bow to match the fuchsias, was doing its best to set comfortably round her bony throat.

She took out her pocket-handkerchief, and began to make a voyage of discovery round the room, lifting up Hugh's boots to see if Betsy had dusted behind them that morning, drawing her finger along the mouldings of the skirting-boards and the gilt frames of Sarah Matilda's pictures, then carefully examining it, to discern, if possible, a darkening shade of dust, upon which she might ground a rebuke to the unfortunate maid-of-all-work. And as she went through this little performance, which Hugh thought might just as well have been attended to while he was away, she opened upon him a brisk fire of remarks.

"Glad to see you back again, sir, and I hope you haven't took cold with being out in the night air. These October damps is a terrible trying thing for the chest, and I don't doubt but what you're glad enough to get back to a good fire, and things comfortable about you, which I always try to make them for any body as takes my apartments; for they do say the house at Lyneton Abbots is that cold and draughty, while the rheumatism has settled itself in the family, and can't be shook off. And I dare say it's something of that has made them as stiff as what they are, for it's a stiffening thing, is the rheumatism, as ever was; though, for the matter of that, the Lyneton Abbots people didn't need any thing to make them stiffer than what they was before."

And Mrs. Mallinson laughed. It was very, *very* seldom that she laughed. She was generally too much engaged in commenting upon the failings of other people, which, as she often said, was not a subject to be laughed about, other people being for the most part such a very poor set; but this was such a pleasant little joke, and one of her own making, too, she really could not help appreciating it. More especially as Mr. Deeping seemed backward in doing so. He sat there in the easy-chair and looked right into the fire, just as if she had said nothing brilliant. But, then, some people never could understand a joke!

"Yes, it's a great misfortune that the rheumatism should have settled itself in that family, for I'm sure if ever there were people who had as much stiffness as they knew what to do with, it's the family at Lyneton Abbots. Not as I was ever brought personally along with them, for they don't accustom my husband's place of business, nor never did; not as I consider that an object, for Mr. Mallinson isn't tied to a few orders, as some people is—Mrs. Green for example, as it makes all the difference in the world to her whether she can get an extra customer or not; and I'm sure she's held her head up just like a giraffe ever since Mr. Lyneton's man has got bread for the family there, which she puts it about the neighborhood that he has, though I have my doubts, for all she's a joined member of the old body, and sets up for enjoying a blessed experience. I never have any thing to say against an experience, if people lives conformable to it; but a business is a much better thing for getting on in the world with, like Mr. Mallinson has got together with his own industry, and always keeping a good article, which I'm proud to say he does, let the markets be what they may."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed, with a vigorous upheaval of her right shoulder, which made the fuchsias nod their scarlet heads one after another. She did so enjoy having a little to say in the direction of Mrs. Green, especially since the Lyneton Abbots people had gone past her husband's place of business to buy their bread and flour of the meek-faced widow further down the road.

"But I came up, sir, to-night to say that me and my husband would be glad for you to come and make yourself free of the back parlor, quite in a friendly way with the rest of us, for we've got the minister to his tea, as he mostly comes on a Saturday, when the sermons is off his mind, poor man! and I dare say they're a load for him, he being only young and inexperienced in pulpit-work, and not much of a gift either in doctrines, as I could tell from the very first time I heard him preach at Grosmont Road, though, as I always tell him, doctrines is the importantest things in preaching; me and my husband don't think any thing of preaching when the doctrines isn't well set forth. And I always feel it my duty, when Mr. Barton comes, to impress it on his mind as he ought to give special attention in that way, and not be always on the practical enforcements, as he mostly is, meekness and charity, and not speaking evil of no one, and all that sort of thing, which I don't object to, when it's kept in its proper place; but according to my thinking, when all's said and done, doctrines ought to have the foremost stand. And that's what I feel it my duty, as being a leading member of the congregation, to represent to Mr. Barton, him not knowing, as he doesn't, what's suitable to the members."

During the whole of this exposition of her views with regard to doctrine, Mrs. Mallinson had been prosecuting her voyage of discovery round the room, without as yet finding any reasonable cause of complaint against the maid-of-all-work. Now, however, in the course of her investigations, she stumbled upon Hugh's boots, which he had taken off when he came in from his long walk, and seizing upon them, she carried them in triumph to the head of the stairs, calling to Betsy to come up that instant, and fetch them down, and see that they were properly cleaned. What did the girl think she was hired into the house for, Mrs. Mallinson would like to know, if somebody else was always to be looking after her, and reminding her of what she had to do, and seeing that she did it properly? And no attention paid to any thing without being told of it, and nobody's comfort thought of, so long as she could get through her work somehow, and then shut herself up in the kitchen with that ridiculous crochet! Mrs. Mallinson hadn't patience with it! And *did* the girl ever mean to come up stairs and fetch the boots down, or was Mrs. Mallinson to stand there with them all night, she should like to know?

Whereupon Betsy, who remembered that other

little breeze a week ago, came sullenly up stairs, not without one or two growls of unmistakable defiance, and then clattered down again with the unconscious boots, which seemed destined to operate as frequent disturbers of domestic peace, this being already the second quarrel they had produced since their owner's settlement at Canton House only a few days before.

Having got the boots off her hands, and out of her mind, Mrs. Mallinson returned to the exposition of her views in general.

"And I've got him drawn out, sir, into serious conversation, as I always think it proper to do with a minister of religion. It's what a minister ought to feel himself called upon to do, is to keep his religion properly before the congregation, and always be ready to express himself, when there's an opportunity, with something useful, and to the purpose. Which I tell Mr. Barton he isn't so forward to do as me and my husband could wish to see him, being a quiet man, and not so active in letting his light shine, specially upon the doctrines, as he ought to be, considering it's a new cause at the present, and naturally wants a deal of bringing forward.

"A pleasant man, though," continued Mrs. Mallinson, with another sniff, "and never sets himself to know better than me and my husband, as, of course, it isn't his interest to do, seeing we have the keep of him to arrange for, as one may say, Mr. Mallinson being the leading man in the split, and always looked to to give his support in any thing important, besides taking the chair, and coming forward with gold upon the plate, because of its being a public situation; and I'm glad to say Mr. Barton knows his place, and don't presume. And so, sir, we'll expect you in the back parlor as soon as you've got yourself rested and tidied up, and I'll tell Betsy as you won't want tea brought in, because of an early supper with us, which we always have when Mr. Barton comes in, poor man, of a Saturday night, so as he may get to bed soon, ready for Sunday."

And having made this ingenious domestic arrangement, and having assured Hugh that he need not feel at all bashful, for there was nobody but Mr. Barton and Sarah Matilda, she returned to the back parlor, leaving her lodger to muse upon the pleasures of hope.

Which—at any rate the pleasures in the immediate foreground of the picture—were by no means so inviting as those of memory. Hugh would much rather have disposed himself once more at full length in that slippery easy-chair, and lived over again in imagination the almost dream-like events of the afternoon, than have taken the trouble of putting himself in a fit state for enjoying the treat which Mrs. Mallinson held out for his acceptance. However, spite of his surface faults and failings, Hugh Deeping had a kindly heart, one which was generally ready to minister to the satisfaction of others, even to the extent, sometimes, of personal inconvenience. And so with just one longing look at the solitary fireside where he thought to have spent such a pleasant evening, he "tidied himself up," and went down stairs to make his first state appearance before Oresbridge society, in Mrs. Mallinson's back parlor.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mrs. Mallinson, in the absence of her husband, who seldom got out of his shop on Saturdays until nearly midnight, occupied the post of honor, a large arm-chair by the fire, comfortably apart from draughts or other inconveniences. In days gone by, when the provision-dealer and his family belonged to the old body, this same post of honor would have been acceded to any minister who happened to be a passing guest in the house. But among several other fallacies which the Mallinson people had discarded when they "went off with the split," was the old, worn-out notion that the ministerial office had any superior claims to respect and distinction. The minister of Grosmont Road was looked upon as a needful appliance of the new cause, valuable in so far as he filled the chapel, and raised the collections, and secured the letting of the seats. If he failed to compass these important ends, he was changed, just as they would have changed their pulpit-cushions, or their communion cloth, and his place supplied by a fresh importation of more popular talent. Apparently their present minister, Mr. Barton, who sat on the cool side of the room, holding a skein of silk for Sarah Matilda, was not a man whom the heads of the Grosmont Road congregation delighted to honor; and as for esteeming him highly in love for his work's sake, that was a reach of Christian perfection to which they never dreamed of attaining.

Mrs. Mallinson got up when Hugh came in, with a jerk that sent the scarlet fuchsias into a state of brisk activity.

"Very glad to see you, Mr. Deeping. Yon's Mr. Barton sitting on the other side, and that's my daughter, Sarah Matilda, the only one me and my husband's got left. There was other three of them, but they was took unawares while they were little, which makes us set more store by her, as you may say. Sarah Matilda, let Mr. Deeping have that chair of yours; you can bring it nearer hand the fire for him, for I dare say he's got the cold pretty well set into him with being all the afternoon in that draughty old place at Lyneton Abbots, as they say there isn't such a place for draughts in the country round."

Sarah Matilda went through an elaborate boarding-school courtesy, such as the young ladies at Miss Veneering's finishing establishment used to practice half an hour a day before the looking-glass, and then she brought Mr. Deeping the chair, as directed.

She was a smart, gayly-dressed girl of nineteen or twenty, put together with a solid square-built sturdiness which seemed to preclude an

human probability of her being "taken off unawares," like the younger members of her family. She was not at all unprepossessing-looking to persons whose taste in female beauty inclined toward a redundance of breadth and color; for there was a ruddy healthful robustness about her, which she vainly endeavored, by tight lacing and frequent drinking of very strong tea, to check. She was possessed of much brisk natural practicality, and almost more than needful self-confidence, glossed over with a film of boarding-school politeness, through which, nevertheless, it kept striking up, threatening by and by to degenerate into her mother's boldness and complacency. She was straightforward and unabashed in every thing she undertook, from the management of a public tea-tray, or the superintendence of a bazar-stall, to the securing of a partner for life. A girl, moreover, who would never be backward in coming forward, for she had her father's tact and push, joined with the maternal effrontery which kept her, as it kept Mrs. Mallinson, from the remotest idea that any thing either of them said or did could be otherwise than correct—the very thing that ought to be said and done.

She was engaged in an open and straightforward flirtation with Mr. Barton, under pretext of unravelling the tangled silk; a flirtation which the minister, judging from his grave face and absorbed manner, did not greatly appreciate. At all events, he aided very little in the promotion of it, and by no means took advantage of his position as he might have done if so disposed.

He was a thoughtful, almost refined man, this Mr. Barton, evidently out of place among his present surroundings. Most likely accidental circumstances, rather than any innate instinct of rebellion, asserting itself in opposition to the overstrict discipline of Park Street, had made him "go off with the split," and become a religious teacher among its turbulent members. Something in his countenance, too, indicated that he had his own way of thinking about things, though he might be cautious in committing himself by speech or action. A man whose daily bread depends upon the voluntary contributions of an uneducated and narrow-minded congregation, does well not to express opinions too openly. Still, it might be inferred, from a certain hidden strength, underlying the grave meekness of his deportment, that Mrs. Mallinson's influence over him, great as she fancied it to be, was indeed a fancy existing only in her own mind. It was very little of his nature that she had power to reach or comprehend. He wisely appeared to bend to the force of circumstances, but the real man within him stood erect all the time.

The female head of the Grosmont Road congregation seemed to have abandoned her intention of drawing Mr. Barton out in religious conversation. As soon as Hugh was fixed in his place, and the first little preliminaries of social intercourse attendant upon the advent of a new guest in the back parlor had been disposed of, she called upon Sarah Matilda to favor them with a song, previously, however, intimating to Mr. Deeping that a very great treat was in store for him.

"She's very clever at her music, is Sarah Matilda. Me and her father spared no expense to have her taught proper, and got a forty-guinea piano for her as soon as ever she finished off, so as she mightn't lose her practice. You see it's a thing that goes so soon, is music, if young people don't keep it up. I always say there's nothing wants keeping up to the mark like the piano. Let Mr. Deeping hear one of your new songs, Sarah Matilda;" and here Mrs. Mallinson turned to her daughter, who had discarded Mr. Barton's offices as skein-holder, and was busy turning over the contents of a very smart Canterbury; "something that's plenty of tune in it; and don't be afraid of letting your voice come out. She's a beautiful voice, Mr. Deeping, has Sarah Matilda, only you see she has such a foolish way of being nervous before strangers. It's such a thing is nervousness, I wish she would make an effort and get over it."

"Oh, Ma, I'm sure I couldn't help it if it was ever so. You know my heart palpitates so when I'm singing to any body I'm not accustomed to, and my nerves all go in such a way while you wouldn't believe how distressing it is. But you'll excuse it, Mr. Deeping, I'm sure."

And Matilda looked up pleadingly to Hugh, whose thoughts were so far away from either her or her nervousness. However, he recollected himself sufficiently to say that he could make allowances for the very distressing infirmity to which she was a martyr; and then, as in duty bound, he conducted her to the piano and turned over the leaves for her, while, with no very striking outward manifestation of timidity, though she kept protesting between every verse that she was so nervous she didn't know what to do with herself, she went through one of the fashionable songs of the day, full of the customary sentimentalisms which modern ballad writers think proper to inflict upon their music-loving public.

The young girl really had a very good voice. Loud—when not under the dominion of that distressing nervousness, it must have been something wonderful for volume of sound—clear, well in tune, first-rate, as her mother expressed it, for leading off in a choir. Some of her notes were so musical that Hugh, little thinking what the consequences might be, began to weave beneath them a very harmonious second, in that well-trained bass voice of his.

Sarah Matilda clasped her hands in a boarding-school ecstasy of delight. She had never heard any thing so beautiful in all her life. It was quite equal, she said, to the very best bass voice that had ever been engaged at a hundred guineas a night for the Oresbridge concerts; so deep and rich and mellow, every thing, in short, that a bass voice ought to be.

"Oh! Mr. Deeping, I'd no *idea* you were so musical, and I *do* so dote upon a bass voice, *don't* I, Ma? I've said over and over again, if there was one thing I doted upon more than another, it was a good bass voice. Now *haven't* I, Ma?"

And Sarah Matilda gave a triumphant glance past quiet little Mr. Barton, whose star had set, never to rise again, toward Mrs. Mallinson.

"Yes, my dear," replied that lady, "and it's been such a disadvantage to her, Mr. Deeping, not having any body to practice with her. You see her Pa, not being a musical man, and having no brothers nor any thing of that kind, didn't give her no opportunity of duets, which I've always been sorry for; I'm uncommon partial to young people singing together. But I'm sure she won't be fixed in that way no more, now that we've found out what a beautiful voice you've got; and you must come down stairs whenever you've a mind to, and join in with Sarah Matilda. I'm sure she wouldn't object if you was to come in every night even, for she's such a taste for music, haven't you now, Sarah Matilda?"

Sarah Matilda, thus appealed to, slightly hung down her head, and with a modest look in the direction of the new lodger admitted that she had a taste for music, especially vocal music; only she was so very nervous when she was called upon to play before strangers. If Mr. Deeping would believe her, she really trembled so at that very moment, that she could almost faint away.

"Such a pity, my dear, and you ought to use your endeavors to get over it, oughtn't she, Mr. Deeping? For she takes her high notes beautiful, if you could only hear her when she's in the bosom of the family, and no strangers present. And now, then, let us have something else, Sarah Matilda, something that Mr. Deeping can join in with; and don't give way, but let him hear you go up a good height. It's such a thing is nervousness, when it interferes with a person taking their high notes."

Sarah Matilda, nothing loth, yet thinking it only consistent with proper bashfulness to enter a mild protest against being "called upon" so often, when her nerves were distressing her so, turned to the piano once more; and poor Hugh, seeing no way of escape, was compelled to put in a "second" to song after song, until Betsy, coming in to lay the cloth for supper, introduced a pleasing change in the performance. When supper was over, Mr. Barton, who seemed to have dropped out of notice altogether, took his leave, and Hugh was going to do the same. But Mrs. Mallinson did not intend him to do any thing of the sort.

"You must sit a bit longer, Mr. Deeping, you must indeed. I'm sure we're both of us uncommon glad to see you, and you're not intruding, so don't be afraid. I like young men that don't presume; but we're not looking at it in that light at all, nor shan't do, whenever you like to come in of an evening. And now Mr. Barton's gone we'll have a bit more music, for there's nothing I like better than a bit of music of an evening, unless it be getting drawn out into profitable conversation. I meant to have got Mr. Barton drawn out, poor man! to-night, but—"

Hugh looked involuntarily toward the open door through which Mr. Barton, who was putting on his coat in the passage outside, must have heard every word, even had it been spoken in a voice more softly pitched than Mrs. Mallinson's. She understood the look, and hastened to assure Mr. Deeping that there was not the slightest occasion for any little punctilio of that kind in the present instance.

"Oh! never mind the door being open. Mr. Barton knows that we never make no concealments in this house; we always say what we think, does me and my husband, and if things is laid upon our minds to say as isn't agreeable to the pride of the flesh, the sooner they're done with the better. I wanted him drawn out in conversation, only the music was set on, and put it off in a manner, being such an unexpected surprise that you could join in with a second, and such a treat to Sarah Matilda. He has a very good gift in conversation, has Mr. Barton, poor man! when he gets drawn out, though his views on doctrines isn't always what me and my husband could wish, being too much on the practical enforcement, which we don't think profitable."

Mrs. Mallinson had got into an exposition again now, and forgot even the music. Hugh was glad for once that she should go to an unlimited extent in the statement of her views, since it saved him from the necessity of "joining in" with Sarah Matilda in any more duets. And it was evidently such a satisfaction to her to have this opportunity of holding forth.

"We've been thinking, have my husband and me, that we ought to open our minds to him on the subject, or there must be a change looked out for before long. He's a man that won't get on in the ministry, is Mr. Barton, especially in our congregation, because of the people looking into things more than what most other congregations does. You see, we're not like the old body. We don't look to be put under our minister, and obey him blindfold, just as if we'd nothing to do, as you may say, but pay our money and take in what any body chooses to say to us. They're a thinking people, is the members of the split as my husband raised a year or two back, and the minister has to meet their views, and if he don't do it, we must have one looked out for as does; and we've heard of a very likely young man as would be glad of an engagement to preach, and my husband was thinking of asking him over, to see if he was such as we should be agreeable to have."

"But you'll hear Mr. Barton for yourself tomorrow morning," continued Mrs. Mallinson, as Sarah Matilda, rather tired of this lengthy exposition, moved off to the piano, "for there's a seat in our pew as you're welcome to the use of, not being let at present, and no mention of the rent, which is five shillings a quarter, but

I dare say we shan't disagree about that, being one of the best situations in the chapel for seeing and hearing. And cushions too, and a carpet, and every thing that's comfortable, and painted all through in imitation of the best oak, and the ceiling in a beautiful open-work pattern, so as I say it's a pity we haven't eyes on the top of our heads to appreciate it. For when Mr. Mallinson put himself at the head of the subscriptions, leading off with a couple of hundred pounds, which was four times a much as any of the rest of the split could afford, but we did it because of me and my husband being the chief support, and looked up to as burning and shining lights, I said to him that if we were going to have a chapel at all, we would have it done handsome, so as the old body shouldn't find occasion to look down upon it, and trust to Providence for the debt, which is something heavy; but the bazar last Christmas helped it off a good deal; and there isn't a better place of worship in Oresbridge now, than what me and my husband has been instrumental in raising in Grosmont Road. And so, sir, you'll be welcome tomorrow morning, to the end seat next the door, number twenty-five; but as you'll go with the family, there won't be no trouble in finding it."

Then Mrs. Mallinson sniffed conclusively, and resumed her seat by the fire.

CHAPTER XX.

Hugh Deeping bowed politely in acknowledgment of his landlady's prospective kindness. But a much brighter thought came into his mind as he turned over the leaves of Sarah Matilda's music, Mrs. Mallinson meanwhile regarding the two young people with a complacent smile, and balancing in her own mind the respective merits of the ministerial profession and the iron business.

She decided in favor of the latter. For, as she said to her husband that same night, after the shop was closed, iron was such an excellent thing for getting a young man on in the world; there was really nothing like it; it seemed to give him a start right away, if only he kept to it, and wasn't afraid of work. And for her part, there was nothing she should be more thankful for than to see Sarah Matilda comfortably settled with some one who had agreeable prospects in that line. It would be a load off her mind, she said, being the only one in the family, and naturally so very much laid upon their affections, if she should meet with somebody suitable. And then the good lady, seeing that her husband was too intent upon the counting out of his Saturday gains to bestow proper attention on any thing she might have to advance, drifted off into a mental process of castle-building, which ended with the customary nasal demonstration, given this time with unusual significance.

But, unfortunately for Mrs. Mallinson's spec*ulations, Hugh's bright* thought led him in *quite another direction.* And so it came to pass next morning, when the Oresbridge bells were calling shoals of well-dressed people to their devotions, and filling the streets with equipages of all degrees of magnificence, from the one-horse basket-carriage of the thriving tradesman, who had just set up a house in the country, to the luxuriously-stuffed and padded barouche of the merchant millionnaire, Mr. Feverige's young clerk found himself once more on the shady road which led to Lyneton Abbots church. Greatly, it must be confessed, to the disappointment of Sarah Matilda, who had quite reckoned upon his company in the Mallinson family pew at Grosmont Road Chapel. Sarah Matilda enjoyed taking strangers to chapel, especially gentlemen, for then there used to be so many inquiring glances toward number twenty-five, and such stealthy turning of bonneted heads in that direction during the performance of service, and such undisguised criticism of the visitor when the congregation was dispersing; followed, upon the first convenient opportunity, by various pleasant little inuendoes from inquisitive female friends, who, of course, could look upon the new worshiper in no other light than that of a fresh aspirant for the honor of Miss Mallinson's affections, and gave her their congratulations accordingly. Sarah Matilda liked any thing of that sort very much. It never hurt nor grieved her, not in the least, that people should pry into any private affairs of hers, and make their remarks thereupon either to herself or others. Indeed, she rather enjoyed it than otherwise, and lost no opportunity of laying herself open to such broadcast insinuations, which invested her, as she imagined, with enviable superiority over other members of the congregation, incipient maiden ladies, and speculating mammas with very large families of daughters, who never got a stray occupant of that kind into their pews.

So that it was quite an overclouding of her prospects when Mr. Deeping announced his intention of going to the old church at Lyneton Abbots, instead of performing his morning devotions beneath the splendidly-decorated ceiling of the Grosmont Road Chapel, in Mrs. Mallinson's pew, with cushions in abundance, and no mention of rent at present, which was five shillings a quarter.

Mrs. Mallinson, too, felt herself slightly aggrieved. Not, she said, that it was any object having the seat let, nothing of the sort, and Mr. Deeping need not consider himself bound to it if the situation was not suitable, though it *was* the best in the chapel for seeing and hearing, and finished off with every thing that made it desirable for parties wishing to worship with comfort and convenience, and room enough for their feet, and a hot-air pipe passing directly under it, as Mr. Mallinson expressly stipulated there should be when he sat on the committees, and headed the subscription with such a noble sum, being, as she might say, a leading man in the concern, and looked up to for something handsome. But she certainly did think

that Mr. Deeping would have felt the compliment of being asked, and would at any rate have considered it his duty, after paying such attention to Sarah Matilda on the previous evening, to accompany the family to chapel, and so make himself, as she might express it, one of themselves, which she had always wished him to be from the time that she heard of his good prospects at the Bellona iron works.

And Mrs. Mallinson was so convinced of the correctness of these her opinions, that she confided them to Sarah Matilda, while putting on her new winter bonnet—from one of the best shops in Oresbridge, thirty shillings, velvet, with French flowers inside and out, such a bonnet for style and effect as never had had the benediction said over it in Park Street chapel, she dare venture to say—and doubtless she would have expressed them, though perhaps in a modified form, to Mr. Deeping himself, had he not disarmed her incipient discontent by proposing to join the Grosmont Road congregation in the evening.

So Hugh left behind him the smoke and fog of Oresbridge, and bent his steps to the quiet village, where little clusters of people were already wending their way to the church-yard, loitering there among the grave-stones, or waiting, as many of the children did, Sunday after Sunday, by the grassy path under the yew-trees, to get a smile from Jeanie and Miss Lyneton as they came up to the chancel door.

The old church at Lyneton Abbots, around whose hoary tower so many quiet sleepers lay, waiting for the morning; St. Hilda's Church, which guarded in its stony clasp the ashes of many a noble knight and lady fair; within whose walls, so mouldering now, and lichened over with damp of age, the true life of man had been fed and strengthened by his worship; where sweet words of praise had told forth the gladness of human hearts, and where, sore wounded by many a grief, and stained by many a sin, those same hearts had breathed out all their sadness: where, when faith had not yet learned to waver, nor reason, striving after things too lofty for her, to touch with proud hand the Name which is above every name, the simple village people had come to listen to the teaching of that Book, whose sweet stories were for them true as the stars, and lasting as the eternal hills, upon whose terrible warnings or brave bright words of cheer no sceptic yet had laid his cold "perchance" of doubt and scorn. The old church of Lyneton Abbots, so hallowed by the noblest life of generations past, how entering there, it seemed as though man's vain and foolish thoughts must fall away, touched by the felt presence of those other thoughts which the long ago dead worshipers had left behind; and so the soul, set free from earthly greed, and toil, and longing, might win its home in the one great thought of God.

So Hugh Deeping felt, as he uncovered his head, and went for the first time into St. Hilda's *Church, the church* where, for more than five centuries past, the Lyneton people had been laid to rest.

The bells had but just begun to chime, and only a few stray people had come in, mostly very aged women, who gathered round the pulpit, and seemed, when they were not talking to each other in subdued under-tones, to be diligently spelling out the service in their worn prayer-books.

Hugh had no prayer-book, and, indeed, for the finding of his places it would have been of little use to him; for the order of Morning and Evening Prayer throughout the year, as observed by devout Church people, was entirely unfamiliar to him, and he knew scarcely any thing of Advent, or Lent, Quinquagesima, Sexagesima, or Trinity Sundays, beyond seeing them duly entered in the almanacs. So, as the village people kept dropping in, he seated himself in a quiet corner by the reading-desk, where his unwitting non-observance of the Church forms would not be conspicuous, and retired into the seclusion of such thoughts as place, and time, and circumstance might bring.

St. Hilda's Church was a quaint old building, quite as decrepit and much more time-worn than the many-gabled mansion across the road, whose inmates had been christened, married, and buried for successive generations beneath the shadow of its oaken-beamed roof. The walls were crowded with tablets, some of whose inscriptions were quite effaced with stain of age and mildew. Here were records, too, of gifts made to the church, so many acres of land left by Dame Somebody, of the parish of St. Hilda, whose rental was to be divided among a certain number of poor widows of the same parish; such and such a farmstead bequeathed to the feoffees, under condition of their restoring, at stated intervals, the statue of St. Hilda over the church porch. And, next to that, a very worm-eaten panel, let into the pillar just over the church-warden's pew, informed those who were patient enough to decipher its almost illegible characters, that Mistress Dorothy de Langworth, of this parish, did give and bequeath, out of her personal estate, the sum of five pounds yearly, to be expended by the church-wardens in bread, and by them distributed to the poor of the parish forever.

But in the chancel these lesser relics of departed worth gave place to the costly marble urns and sculptured angels which guarded the dust of the ancient Lyneton race. Under carven canopies, beneath full-mailed effigies, with sword, and spear, and shield, they slept peacefully enough now, those doughty warriors, whose names had once had a sound of terror in them, those fair-cheeked maidens, dowered with ancestral pride and beauty, who had once lighted up with their smiles the old house at Lyneton Abbots, or made merry with the music of their voices its now so quiet chambers. There they lay, and Hugh Deeping, from his sheltered corner behind the reading-desk, could ponder over their epitaphs one and all, from the full-

length recumbent statue of Sir Gasparin de Lyneton, founder of the line, whose tomb was restored and beautified in the year 1600 by his descendant, Roger de Lyneton, onward, century after century, until he reached the two monumental brasses, scarcely tarnished yet, under which lay the latest buried of that proud house; their rank, title, and estate set forth very briefly, for Graham Lyneton was a man who ever disliked pomp and show.

"Margaret Lyneton Lyneton of Hatherleigh-Lyneton, in the county of Middlesex, married to her cousin, Graham Lyneton, of Lyneton Abbots, in this county; died December 21st, 18—, aged twenty-five."

That monumental brass was very rich with armorial bearings and quarterings, and it bore on shield and scroll the Lyneton device of a hand and cross—trust and daring—in which two things none of that house had ever failed. The next was much simpler, having only Mr. Lyneton's own arms. The Highland wife was no lady of high degree to need much telling of her rank and title, much graving of escutcheons and armorial bearings. This was all it held:

"Jean Wardour, second wife of Graham Lyneton; died September 19th, 18—, sincerely loved and deeply lamented."

Jeanie's mother.

Hugh Deeping was yet musing over this inscription, which was difficult enough to decipher, being done in old Church text, with illuminated capitals, when the gray-headed serving-man, who had answered his summons the day before, came in through a little side entrance, and held open the door of the chancel-pew for the Manor House people to enter.

Mr. Lyneton first; then Gwendoline, calm-eyed and grave as any of the noble race whose name she bore; next, Jeanie, youngest born and best beloved—Jeanie, who wore her mother's smile, and whose mother's heart looked out again from eyes of the bluebell's own color. Truly they were winning eyes, so loving and so trustful; telling of no great spirit, of no strong will that could dare and do in life's hard battle, telling only of a kindly nature, full of trust, because never yet deceived, full of love, because receiving nought but love again. Jeanie Lyneton's great beauty was in that guileless look of hers. With it, she could not but win love wherever she went. Like the fabled ring which guarded one beauteous lady safe from thought or touch of harm, from shore to shore of Erin's Island, that look of Jeanie's would be her talisman so long as the true heart of which it told, held fast its truth.

The service began. With a strange beauty the grand old words of the English liturgy fell upon Hugh's ear. Brought up, as he had been, under a system which abjures all form and ceremony, and leaves its members free to worship God in their own fashion, there gathered for him no air of sanctity, no charm of long past associations, around those prayers and confessions, through which the religious life of so many generations had found fit utterance. Yet he joined in them now with the more reverence, because they had not become to him as they have become to many who utter them Sunday after Sunday, through the length and breadth of our land, the mere shell of an outworn feeling, the noble and graceful vesture of a body from which the soul has long ago fled.

For Hugh, that Litany, in which even now Jeanie Lyneton, with bowed head and reverent voice, was joining, seemed to tell out all his life, its best desires, its deepest penitence, its longing after rest and peace and purity. Though untried as yet in all that makes the deep and terrible earnestness of life, though untouched by the iron which enters into the soul, that wound which sooner or later every true man must needs feel, he had not lived a thoughtless life—nay, there had been much of worthy effort in it, much true and enduring labor, much fostering of good purposes, which might, when the time came, blossom into actions as good.

But little strife. The right and the wrong had never fought desperately together in Hugh's heart. He had never been crushed by a power of evil so great that his own weak power of good could no longer stand against it. There had been no battle for him as yet; what wonder, then, that he never sought for spear or sword to help him in the fight? No Giant Despair had come out against him with front of gloom and terror; his feet had stumbled over no dark mountains; his hands had never been stretched helplessly forth in a gloom upon which not the faintest streak of dawn arose, to tell that morning would come ere long. Through all those bright years of youth and early manhood, circumstances had never called forth any power of resistance which lay dormant within him. His life had been just one pleasant summer day, whose blue sky no thunder-storm had ever yet visited, first to cloud and then to purify it.

Until three months ago, when experience began to tell him a different story, and teach him by rude toil and endeavor what in the sheltered seclusion of the old life he could never learn. He had read of fortitude and self-denial; of the quiet bravery which plods through weary days and wins no laurels at their close; of the patient heroism whose triumphs are unrecorded, save by the holy angels. But only read of them, never thought that he would have to practice them for himself. Now, he was bidden go forth and do that of which he had but dreamed before. He was bidden to make his own life, like all other worthy lives, perfect through suffering. This was a hard task, one from which stouter hearts than his have turned in sadness, finding no way to fulfill it. It is easier to behold far off the lofty mountain which wears the sun's bright coronet upon its brow, and folds so royally around it its purple robe of cloud, than to climb step by step past many a vexing brake and pitfall, through cloud which is *only* beautiful far off, to the shining height where storms never come.

And of the bitter strife and questioning, the dis-

content and restlessness which those three months past had taught him—not the bitterest, though, which he would know—these prayers and confessions seemed to be telling out all the story. Listening to them, joining in them as he had never joined in any prayer before, Hugh felt himself lifted into a higher world of thought. He began to feel that no past need be counted altogether unhappy which has turned dreaming into doing, thought into action; that into every life-work which God has given, there may be brought an earnest purpose and a noble consecration which shall make it great; that for those who use it worthily, even disappointment may be a rich inheritance—a precious gift, though one which asks no thanks.

These thoughts fell into Hugh's mind as he listened to the prayers in Lyneton Abbots church; fell there to take root and bring forth fruit in their own time and season. And side by side with them, not dimming their holiness by its touch, came his thought of Jeanie Lyneton. Truly not dimming their holiness; for any man whose love is pure and faithful need not fear to place it side by side with his brightest thought of God.

For he had but to look up, and her face was before him, peaceful as faces we see sometimes in dreams. Little Jeanie Lyneton, the one girl out of all the world for whom he felt he could toil and strive and labor and wait—ay, wait, it might be for long years, so only he should win her for himself at last.

You may smile at Hugh Deeping because he was so easily wrought upon—because, as he sat there by the reading-desk, there were tears in his eyes, and strange, new desires stirring within him. You may call him romantic if you will, fitful, impressible; too much so for stability or trustworthiness. He might be so, perhaps he was. Great truths rise slowly; life does not teach any one all its lessons in a few little years. Like a fire newly fed, his spirit burned within him now. By and by, it would calm into an even glow, giving out more heat, if less flame. But say that he was simply fascinated by the unaccustomed beauty of a fine ritual, charmed by the poetry of an old religious worship; that he would fall back when its influence was forgotten, into the former thoughtlessness—no; for it needs not time, but only God's great power and a simple faith, to turn the current of a human life and bend it onward to the right. Say that he was beguiled by a sweet face, dazzled by a pair of beautiful eyes shining down into the unoccupied chambers of his fancy—no; for if some hearts drift slowly toward each other, only learning through long years to love and trust, others touch through a single look, and part again no more forever.

CHAPTER XXI.

And Gwendoline sat there all the time in the Manor House pew, looking so calm and stately; beneath her the ashes of the brave knights and courtly ladies out of whose life her own had grown; above her their names, ancient, noble, unsullied names, graven in the stone which told how purely they had lived, how truly they had loved, how fearlessly they had died and passed away, leaving behind them an unstained honor, that noblest heritage their children could hold in fee.

Yes, who had loved so truly, never betraying any who trusted them. There lay the body of Alitha de Lyneton, who waited twelve years while her betrothed fought in the ranks of the Crusaders; waited for him so long, and received him home at last, dead. Then she lived a lonely life for his sake; and dying, was buried here in this old church of Lyneton Abbots. And the brave knight Bertram, too, who wore his lady's colors on many a battle-field, and never cared for look or smile save hers; who was so true to her, through tedious campaign and foreign march, nor feared to leave her in the gay queen's court, because she belonged to the old Lyneton house; and when did any that trusted a Lyneton find that trust betrayed? And next to Bertram was the name of Eleanor—noble and faithful Eleanor, who for the love that she bore her husband, followed him, his page, to the far-off battle-field, and served him there through all the fight; and unloosed his helm and bound his wound, and gave him drink when he was dying; and then, laying her face to his, died too, and the soldiers buried them together, none knowing who she was.

Should Gwendoline Lyneton be less true than these? Should she fail when they had stood so nobly? Nor was it for honor only that she should keep her trust to him, who thought of her across the seas, and loved her well, though nothing bound them but each other's truth.

And then Gwendoline thought of that July night five years ago, when, under the old stone griffins by her brother's gate-way, Maurice Demeron had said good-bye to her, knowing that they would meet no more again until for both of them the brightness of youth was passed away. Knowing that long years of trial for her, of foreign toil for him, lay between this parting and his welcome home; knowing, too, that Gwendoline Lyneton was as faithful as she was proud, and that while the fair flower of her love sheltered itself beneath the rock of that pride, no storm could ever uproot or shake it.

Perhaps that thought was lingering in her heart still, when Hugh Deeping, happening to look from Jeanie's face to hers, saw upon it that almost gentle smile which came so rarely, and made her seem so beautiful. Seeing it, Hugh thought they were surely wrong who called Miss Lyneton only proud.

All too soon for him, who could have stayed in that old church many long hours, nor found

them wearisome, the service came to a close. As he watchd Jeanie Lyneton stand up during the last singing, and caught now and then some sweet tone of her voice, the words of a pleasant rhyme came chanting themselves through his memory — words that had come there many times before, only for their music, but now with other charm than that:

"Long was the good man's sermon,
Yet it seemed not so to me,
For he spake of Ruth, the beautiful,
And still I thought of thee.

"Long was the prayer he uttered,
Yet it seemed not so to me,
For in my heart I prayed with him,
And still I thought of thee."

The gray-haired servant came to open the pew door, and Hugh drew back that they might not see him as they passed out. But when all the people were gone—when the clergyman had put off his surplice, and disappeared behind the laurel hedge which skirted the Rectory garden—when the old sexton woman was clearing away the last of the prayer-books from the school-children's gallery to the church-warden's pew, where they were kept for better safety, he lingered in the chancel, under pretext of examining the Lyneton monuments, which, indeed, brought many an antiquarian there, for they were considered grand specimens of old English art. And while the woman, with an eye to possible half-crowns, pointed to one and another canopied tomb, and told him some deed of lofty daring, or some story of true love, which belonged to it, Hugh Deeping sat in Jeanie's corner, under the first Mrs. Lyneton's hatchment, aud leaned his head against the pillar where hers had rested sometimes, and turned over the leaves of the prayer-book—the great leather-covered prayer-book, with the Lyneton device upon its clasps, and almost wished that the old woman would keep on talking until afternoon church-time.

He was glad, though, that she had not been drawn out to such an extent, when, coming out of church at last, and turning into the narrow foot-road which led across to the Manor House, he met the two ladies coming home from the walk which they generally took after morning service—met them so unexpectedly, that he had not time to turn aside, as most likely, with a new unaccustomed instinct of shyness, he would have done, had he seen them in the distance.

Gwendoline was standing in the gate-way, where she had said good-bye to Maurice Demeron five years ago, the brown leaves dropping upon her, and crushing under her feet. Brown autumn leaves, which would not fall again now until he had come home. As Hugh passed, she bowed to him slightly, with grave courtesy, such as she would have used to the humblest of her father's tenants, or the raggedest little village urchin who made his rustic obeisance to her when they chanced to meet on the green. But Jeanie, with a frank, recognizing smile, wished him good-morning, and paused for a moment by the gate, as though, but for the presence of the elder lady, she would have said more. But Miss Lyneton turned, missing the light footstep by her side, and then Jeanie hurried on, and the two were soon out of sight.

So he went home again through the Sabbath noontide stillness, along that secluded country road, where scarce a footstep but his own stirred the dry fallen leaves. Beneath spreading oak-trees, which dropped their ripe acorns upon him as he passed, and scarlet maple-bushes, whose clusters of trembling berries shone like blood-red crystals in the October sun. Home again, with all sweet and pleasant thoughts nestling in his heart, thoughts of joy, which the autumn leaves, telling, as they did, of winter near at hand, of November damp, and December chill, and the slow death of the weary year, had no power to darken. Thoughts which never asked the wherefore of their joy; but strayed on into the happy future, with a sure trust that all would be well.

Home again to the provision-dealer's shop in the Grosmont Road, where a very earthly odor of beef in process of roasting had replaced the usual week-day smell of smoked hams and newly-baked loaves; and where Mrs. Mallinson, in her Sunday gown of black silk, was ready to pounce down upon him with an intimation of dinner at half-past one, punctual. For it had been arranged that Mr. Deeping was to dine with the family on Sundays, and Mr. Mallinson liked his dinner as soon as he came home from chapel; it gave him time to have a comfortable sleep in the afternoon, before the stray exhorter, who generally supplied Grosmont Road in an evening, came in to tea, and a diet of conversation on matters connected with the split.

"A beautiful sermon, sir, and especially clear upon the doctrines," Mrs. Mallinson observed, as she came to inform Mr. Deeping of the dinner arrangement, and then made a tour of investigation round the room, dusting the ornaments meanwhile with her handkerchief, "especially clear upon the doctrines, as me and my husband gave him a hint yesterday he was to be, on account of your being a stranger, and wanting you to be made acquainted with the views of the body. And indeed, sir, my husband took it rather amiss, your not going to the chapel with us, for he's jealous of the honor of the body, is my husband, and can't do with no slight put upon it; and if it isn't any offense mentioning it, sir, he did look at it as something of a slight, and so did Sarah Matilda, as you didn't join us in the family pew, where there's the best of cushions, and every thing to make yourself comfortable with. And excellent, too, for a view of the congregation; because as I said to my husband when he chose the situation, do let us be somewhere prominent, so as we can see the congregation, and if strangers happen to come, and we can be looked up to as an example of attending regular, and putting into all the collections, as it's the duty of the leading members to do, especially when a cause isn't as one may say fairly on its own foundation, as ours isn't at the present time; though

I don't doubt that we shall raise as good an interest before long as what any denomination in Oresbridge can do."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed that vehement, conclusive sniff of hers.

"Yes, sir; a good many of the Park Street folks is looking with an envious eye upon the chapel as my husband has been the means of raising, and it went into them, I know it did, because I had it from a party as is intimate with Mrs. Green, a little further down the road, when our new ceiling was finished so much handsomer than what they was able to do for themselves; not to mention the oak graining which is a deal liker to natural wood, so the architect says himself, than Park Street, though they paid twice as much for it, because of having it done by a good hand; just pride, nothing else but pride, when they saw we was raising up a cause as promised to overget their own, and then the pipes got heated and made it crack, which, as me and my husband said, was a judgment upon them for going to such an expense."

Mrs. Mallinson might have added that the Grosmont Road graining had also cracked and shelled off, in consequence of the overheating of the pipes; but that was not a judgment, nothing of the sort, only a very reprehensible act of carelessness on the part of the chapel-keeper, for which he had just been dismissed. Mrs. Mallinson had a very acute perception of providential judgments, when they alighted upon the Park Street congregation, and caused the oak graining to shell off in their newly-decorated chapel, or visited a certain little shop further down the road on the opposite side, and so overclouded Mrs. Green's business prospects as to prevent her from giving her usual quarterly subscription toward the support of the old body. The finger of Providence was clearly enough seen in such instances as these. But when the Grosmont Road graining came off, or a thundershower penetrated the ventilator and marred the splendor of the ceiling, or Mr. Mallinson's custom fell away in consequence of depression in the iron trade, Providence was not quite so manifest. Indeed, it was ignored altogether, and accidental circumstances took the responsibility upon themselves.

"But we shall look for you to go with us this evening," she continued, giving a finishing touch with her handkerchief to the ornaments on the chimney-piece, "which will show respect to the cause just the same, though it isn't Mr. Barton's turn to preach, only an exhorter, as my husband don't look up to like the regular minister. And we'll be happy if you've a mind to stay to your tea, though it wasn't mentioned in the agreement; and Sarah Matilda'll sing you some of her sacred pieces, for you to join in with. She has some beautiful pieces, has Sarah Matilda, as she was taught at the boarding-school, and she takes the high notes, sir, beautiful, if only she don't give way to her nervousness."

To all which, and very much more, spoken in Mrs. Mallinson's usual exalted key, and accompanied with the customary lateral movements of her face and right shoulder, Hugh listened very patiently. It had no power to vex him now. Girded in by those new, sweet thoughts of his, he was as a man who, sitting by his own inglenook, hears through curtained windows the distant complaining of the wind, and only knows that the air is frosty because it makes his fire burn with a brightened glow.

CHAPTER XXII.

After that Sunday, Hugh settled down to work with new energy. Tough, hard work it was, too, but no longer made more hard and tough by the thought of any meanness or degradation connected with it. He learned that to add up figures at a counting-house desk, with the din of the great hammer sounding in his ears, or to pay to those grimy-faced, hard-handed men the wages they had earned at the smelting-furnaces and the boiler-plate rollers, was a work quite as noble, if only duty called him to it, as rehearsing the lofty flights of Pindar, or solving Euclid's problems in the distant seclusion of college chambers.

Still, look at it as he would, the Bellona iron works could scarcely be considered a paradise, and he never felt drawn out to sing—

"Praise Him from whom all blessings flow,"

with more heartiness than when the six o'clock bell sounded, and the tramp of two hundred iron-shod feet over the clanking floors told that another day's work was done—another round completed on that tread-mill, which, toil at it patiently as he might, would never quite fill up all his life, or be to him just so pleasant as the old quiet used to be.

And then the winter days set in, with their damp and fogs—fogs which never seemed so thick and yellow as at Oresbridge, and they poured their unwholesome breath, mingled with soot and smut, down the counting-house chimney, half blinding Hugh's eyes, and quite smothering his patience, as he plodded on through those endless rows of figures, and drew out invoices of "pigs" and rough iron, and prepared statements and balance-sheets for Mr. Sparkes, the senior partner, to overlook. Mr. Sparkes, who lived in that almost princely villa residence on the Grantford Road, and drove into town every day in a carriage and pair, and had a splendid balance at the banker's, and scrip more than he cared to tell, and knew nothing of Æschylus, or Pindar, or Homer, nor had ever heard that there was any such poet as Euripides, and could scarcely sign his own name correctly, to say nothing of even a distant bowing acquaintance with the grammatical laws of his mother-tongue; while he, Hugh Deeping, with well-trained mind, and cultivated tastes, and college education, had to add up figures, and pay mechanics' wages, and toil from nine in the

morning until six at night for twenty pounds a quarter.

Then there was the coming home evening after evening to the provision-dealer's shop, with its close, pent-up atmosphere, its everlasting smell of meal and bacon and newly-baked loaves; with its cheap-fine up stairs sitting-room, streaked over with draggly antimacassars and scratchy crayon drawings, and its solitary cup and saucer, ranged side by side with a baker's "lump" on the colory-patterned table-cloth. Just this, when he came in tired both in mind and body, longing for the sound of a friend's voice, the clasp of a friend's hand, the warm welcome of a friend's face. Nothing more than this, unless Mrs. Mallinson, heralded by her resonant sniff, came up stairs to invite him into the back parlor, where Sarah Matilda had got some company to tea, and would be "particular pleased" if he would join in with them for a little music. Which meant that he was to "tidy up," and to make himself agreeable to a set of underbred young ladies, who had been criticising him the Sunday night before in chapel; and turn over their music for them, and listen to their lisping commonplaces, or be put through a series of questions relative to his mother and sister, and his previous life, and the circumstances which had led to his settlement in the Bellona iron works. And if, tired with the patter-patter of small talk, he fell out of his place in the conversation and tried to be quiet for a few minutes, he was rallied on the preoccupied state of his affections, and playfully called upon by Miss Sarah Matilda to confess the name and habitation of the fortunate young lady who had captivated him, and was the event likely to take place *very* soon, and was the lady very beautiful, etc.? And then there was a sweet feminine chorus of titters from Miss Mallinson and her assembled company, who thought any thing of that sort was so very amusing; there was really nothing they enjoyed so much as a little joke of that sort.

But for Hugh it was worse than even the loneliness of the tawdry sitting-room up stairs. Indeed, if he ever did sing his doxology with more fervor than upon the ringing of the Bellona six o'clock bell, it was when Betsy came in to fasten up the shutters after one of these musical evenings, and to swathe the piano in its brown-holland pinafore, previous to the general going to bed.

All these little trifling disagreeablenesses put together worried him sometimes, and might have soured him, too, if Lyneton Abbots had not laid its weekly touch of brightness on the otherwise unsunned routine of life. For those were such pleasant afternoons, when, leaving behind him for a little while the smoke, and noise, and vexation of Oresbridge, he took his way down that quiet country road, accompanied by bright hopes, which, sometimes, before he came back again, had changed into brighter memories.

And certainly, if courteous treatment, and even a sort of measured hospitality, could be construed into indications of friendship, Mrs. Deeping's anticipations of the impression which her son would produce upon the Manor House people, did not seem unlikely to be realized. Perhaps, after all, she had not been so egregiously mistaken when she put that corded silk Persigny tie into Hugh's portmanteau, and bought him a pair of the very best black kid gloves that could be got for love or money, and spent an entire morning in ransacking the Jersey haberdashers' shops in search of some collars of a particular cut, which, as the polite salesman assured her, made every one who wore them look "quite the gentleman." Though little Mrs. Deeping was proud to say *her* son was not dependent on collars, or black kid gloves, or Persigny ties, or any thing of that sort, for his gentlemanliness, it being ingrained, and of a class which none of these things could ever give.

For not many of those Saturday afternoon visitations had taken place, involving, as they did sometimes, other conversation than that pertaining to figures and accounts, before Mr. Lyneton discovered that his new secretary had a cultivated mind, and tastes far above those usually found in connection with book-keeping and counting-house management. A chance remark now and then betrayed Hugh's acquaintance with those classic authors, of which, in his younger days, Mr. Lyneton had been so diligent a student. Miss Lyneton, coming into the old wainscoted library on Saturday afternoon, when her brother had been called away, found him, this book-keeper in the Bellona iron works, reading a copy of Homer in the original text, repeating to himself in under-tones the flowing accents of the old Greek tongue—so absorbed, that she passed and repassed him without his being even conscious of her presence. Little by little Mr. Lyneton found that no commonplace, half-taught youth was making his plans and keeping his accounts, but a gentleman and a scholar, one in whom his own mind, finely trained and cultivated as it had been by a long life of association with men and books, could find satisfying companionship.

And so it came to pass that as the long winter evenings closed in, and visitors, always rare at Lyneton Abbots, became rarer still, with the exception of young Martin Allington, the Rector's reading pupil, who, for reasons best known to himself, so often found it needful to stroll over and get down a musty old folio or two from the shelves of Mr. Lyneton's library, always supplementing his study of it by a game of bagatelle with the young ladies—it came to pass, as the winter evenings closed in, that Hugh Deeping was sometimes asked to stay after his work was done, and join them in a quiet hour of reading by the fire, in that oriel-room facing the gate-way; that same room whose ruddy fire-light glow, pouring out into the deserted garden, he, a stranger then and uncared for, had once lingered to watch, longing to enter in and feel its genial warmth.

Pleasant evenings, to be remembered very bitterly some day when his welcome to the old house at Lyneton Abbots was worn out, and no

face smiled to meet him there any more. Gwendoline would bring her etching materials and work at those copies from the old Catholic missals; and Jeanie, whose privilege it was to choose the books, used to sit on a low cushion by her father's chair, listening with rapt, eager attention while Hugh read, in that finely-trained voice of his, the quaint rhymes and sweet fancies of the early English poets, or the brilliant pages of Scott, whose stories of her mother's country Jeanie loved so well to hear. Or sometimes he would read the old ballad poetry, tales of King Arthur's knights, and their fair-haired ladies, or the Troubadour romances which told so many a tale of love and truth, telling it sweetly, too. And then Gwendoline's pencil would rest idly in her white fingers, and the fringed lids would droop over the thoughtful gray eyes, and upon her face, so calm and still, there crept that gentle look which ever made her beautiful.

Much pleasanter that, for Hugh Deeping, than adding up columns of figures in the counting-house at the Bellona iron works—that dingy little counting-house whose one small window looked out into the workmen's sheds, with their blazing furnaces and smutty-faced puddlers, who clanked along with iron-sandalled feet over the metal floors, dragging after them what seemed to be huge red-hot cannon balls, which they heaved under the great hammer, not without a vehement oath sometimes when the unwieldy mass took a wrong turn, or slipped from the grip of their tongs. Pleasanter, too, than being summoned into the back parlor by Mrs. Mallinson, to "join in" with Sarah Matilda in the performance of an indefinitely prolonged series of songs—for that young lady had quite got over her nervousness now—or being marshalled by the said Sarah Matilda to the Grosmont Road Chapel and there compelled to sit in the forefront of the congregation, the observed of all observers, but specially of certain young ladies—Miss Mallinson's intimate friends—who, like the Athenians of old, spent their time in nothing else but to see or hear some new thing; or, perhaps—like the Athenians again—to propagate some new piece of gossip or promising scrap of scandal.

Hugh Deeping felt that he lived a pure, free life at Lyneton Abbots. Though they came but rarely, those evenings gave him strength and courage for the long battle which had to be done between them. And though the real, inmost heart of him never found room to speak even there, though there seemed between him and them a certain indefinable barrier which he could neither understand nor overpass, though Miss Lyneton and her brother never asked him, with the sympathy which would have been so welcome, of his past life, its possible joys, and troubles, and disappointments, never treated him with other than the grave, mechanical courtesy which the old Lyneton people always gave to those with whom they had to do, yet they took him for a little season from the chafing pressure of his daily duties, putting him into contact, if not into companionship, with refined natures, lifting him out of that dull round of task-work, which, with all the hopefulness he brought to it now, was still at times a great weariness—a burden heavy to be carried.

So Hugh thanked God from his very heart for those Saturday evenings in the old oriel-room at Lyneton Abbots where pale-faced Gwendoline sat weaving many a thought and longing into those delicate etchings of hers, where her stately brother, with shut eyes and folded hands, listened to the knightly tales of old—tales of the wars and tournaments wherein his ancestors had won such great renown. And if the reader looked up by chance, Jeanie's face was toward him, with its eager, childish smile—its look of wonder and delight.

But when their eyes met, she turned hers quickly away.

CHAPTER XXIII.

So the December days passed on, with many a fall of snow, that whitened all the church-yard graves, and lay in untrodden drifts on the balustraded terraces of the old house at Lyneton Abbots, and wrapped as in a glistening vestment the figure of Abbot Siward, that had stood for three centuries over the great door-way, looking quietly down while one after another of the Lyneton people had been carried out thence to their other home in St. Hilda's Church. Passed on with many a shining hoar-frost, which turned each branch and spray of the leafless trees to silver, with many a bleak wind swirling down the Oresbridge streets, and making the poor wretches there shiver into sheltered corners, or driving them away out to the open country, to nestle as near as the night-watch would let them to those great blazing furnaces, whose livid tongues shot up into the dark, and kindled the sky for miles round with their warm glow. And half-clad children would huddle together by the open gates, stretching out their little blue hands when some workman came past with his huge lump of red-hot iron. For its glow was so comfortable. They almost felt warm to see it shining in the dark. And they thought that when they grew big and tall, and could work like those strong-handed puddlers, there could be nothing so grand as standing to stir the ore in the great puddling-furnaces. They would never be cold then. They would not need to shiver at the open gates, and gather their rags more closely round them. It must be such a glorious thing to be always warm!

And still Hugh Deeping worked on at the old tread-mill round. But worked on with more spirit and energy now, for he had a bright plan for the future, a plan which would more than bring back all the joy and all the promise of the former life. He had been three months at the Bellona iron works, and Mr. Feverige had just paid him his first quarter's salary; without, it is true, any very high-flown expressions of praise or satisfaction, for Mr. Sparkes's working

partner was always a man of few words. But he gave Hugh what was much more to the purpose, promise of an advance for the next quarter, and for every succeeding quarter, so long as the connection between them should be mutually satisfactory.

Hugh meant to stay there, plodding steadily on, serving his employers' interests as faithfully as he could, until he had laid by enough to enable him to complete his college course, and to spend those two years at Tübingen. Then, with a mind enlarged by knowledge of the world, raised, not lowered, by experience of actual life—also, Hugh reverently felt, being more apt to teach others because having himself learned the true wisdom which comes of self-distrust—he might begin his course again, and reach even yet that coveted position which once seemed so near.

After that.

For still those pleasant afternoons at Lyneton Abbots came, week by week. Hugh worked to some purpose at the plans for improving the worn-out estate. There was hope now that with good management and careful oversight it might hold together, and perhaps after a time be worked round again to a little of its former value. So that he felt his labor was not in vain, even though it had brought him nothing more than the half-yearly stipend which he thought at first was going to be so hardly earned.

But it brought him so much more than that. For generally now, after those long consultations in the library, or walks over the estate, planning, measuring, making estimates for repairs, Mr. Lyneton used to bring his young clerk into that oriel-room where the Manor House people spent their evenings; brought him there to read aloud to them, or that he might help to pass away with his bright, pleasant conversation—for Hugh shone to much more advantage in the oriel-room than in the back parlor of Canton House—those long hours which sometimes hung rather heavily upon their hands. And when they parted, Miss Lyneton no longer bowed to him with grave, distant courtesy; but held out to him her hand, as though he were indeed not an underling in that house, but in some sort a guest, to whom, without any lowering of its ancient dignity, the honor of a guest might be given. Receiving so much already, Hugh Deeping hoped that some day he might be counted worthy enough, honorable enough, to ask for more.

But Miss Lyneton did it out of pure kindness, nothing more; except, perhaps, that she was glad for her brother's sake to welcome this young stranger, and give him a place now and then in their fireside gatherings. For Mr. Lyneton seemed to have taken very cordially to him. He even used to say that he quite looked forward to those Saturday afternoons when Mr. Deeping came. And it was so seldom that he took to any one. He shut himself out so, and lived such a secluded life. It might do him *good to be stirred up a little*, drawn out to feel *an interest in things that* were passing around him. And since Mr. Deeping did certainly brighten him very much, and almost seemed to have brought back his old interest in books and literary conversation, and altogether infused into his life a more genial element, it was simply a courteous return to make him welcome when he came; to sink now and then the actual relationship of employer and employed in the other and more agreeable one of pleasant acquaintance.

But simply acquaintance. Nothing more than that. Between themselves, the Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots, with the pure, knightly blood of eight centuries flowing in their veins, with an ancestral roll unstained by smirch of trade, unsullied by a single name of other than noble degree, and this young man, this nephew of a London haberdasher, this ex-student of some unknown college, who, well trained, it is true, and with tastes somewhat above his position in life, was earning an honest living as under-clerk in the Bellona works, there lay a distance which Gwendoline Lyneton never dreamed he would dare to pass, and count himself their friend. Her brother had kindly shown the young man some little attention, she herself had pitied him, knowing how little companionship he had, and how hard he toiled to keep his place in the world. It was very easy for them to put a little sunshine into his life, to give him from week to week an hour or two of that refined society which he seemed so gratefully to appreciate. More than this Gwendoline never intended. And had Hugh Deeping asked for more, had he ever sought by word or act to pass over one single step of the distance which she had measured between them, he would find that, though sitting, as they so often did, at the same fireside, interchanging the pleasant courtesies of social life, speaking of things, and thoughts, and feelings which all cultivated minds hold in common, giving the hand-clasp of welcome and farewell, and meeting on the mutual ground of intellectual tastes and pursuits, there was yet the icy barrier of caste ever parting them; thin it might be as crystal, and as transparent, but effectual, nevertheless. Like some sheet of fine pure plate-glass, which is never even seen until you seek to clasp hands with the friend on the other side, and then it strikes so cold.

But Jeanie had reared no such barrier between them. She did not need to be taught those two lines which Miss Lyneton used to listen to sometimes, as Hugh read them, with such a quiet, incredulous smile playing over her face—

> "Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith than Norman blood."

All unknown to her aunt Gwendoline, and perhaps also unknown to herself, Jeanie had learned to look forward with glad, happy content to those Saturday afternoons, when her father brought Mr. Deeping in out of the library, and they used to have such pleasant fire-light talks together; or, better still, reading from the old poets, who never seemed half so beautiful

and true as when Hugh lent the music of his voice to give the story all its meaning. For Jeanie could not always understand or appreciate the conversation, when it drifted away, as it sometimes did—Mr. Lyneton being a stanch old Tory—to questions of politics and government, or rights of nations, and other subjects equally intricate and vexing. But she never missed a single beauty in those sweet old poems, never lost one thought that told itself so nobly through the quaint rhymes. And Jeanie fancied, sometimes, that to read them so truthfully, to take the sense of the words, and tell it out with such strong tenderness, the reader must in some sort have lived as these old poets lived, and suffered as they suffered, and looked forth into the great world of life and nature with their pure, gentle eyes, searching out only its brightness, kindly veiling all the rest; and have trusted his fellow-men as they also trusted, and loved as they loved, with a love that could hold so true, that knew no change with changing fortunes, no decay with long parting, or even death.

She had never heard any one read those ballads as Hugh Deeping read them—so simply, with no grand declamations or attitudes, such as Mr. Allington used when he came in after dinner sometimes, and offered to amuse the young ladies for an hour or two with one of those old leather-covered volumes. True, Mr. Allington had a very fine voice, which had been trained under the best elocution masters of Oxford, and he knew the exact place where to stretch out his white hand with an impressive gesture of command, or entreaty, or indignation, or scorn, just as the poetry might seem to demand. But there was no depth of meaning in his voice, no sound of passion or tenderness in it, no feeling that could not be held back, but must needs tell itself, sometimes in faltering words, sometimes in little silences, which revealed so much. And when Mr. Allington had finished one of Jeanie's favorite pieces, he would throw the volume carelessly on the table, and give his hair a few finishing strokes, for it got out of order a little during the process of declamation.

"Pretty thing—very pretty! And nicely told, too, Fine fellows, after all, those old English ballad-writers, only rather too simple-hearted. People don't believe quite so much now, and don't practice all they do believe, either." And then he would propose a game at bagatelle.

Mr. Deeping never said any thing like that. She should not care to hear him read again, if he did. But she did not think he could say it if he tried. And then she wondered what his life had been, and what he used to do before he came to Oresbridge; and whether, when his father died, he had no rich friends who could have helped him to stay at college, and go on learning to be a minister, instead of taking a clerkship in those iron works, and spending all his time adding up accounts, which any common man could have done just as well. Not that she was sorry, though, for his leaving college, because if he had not come to Oresbridge, they should never have known him. And it was very pleasant to know him, to have him come there Saturday after Saturday, and read to them, and brighten her father up, as he always did seem to brighten up when Mr. Deeping came.

Mr. Allington never seemed to make such a difference when he strolled over from the Rectory in an evening after dinner. He was always "strolling over" now, and playing bagatelle with them; or bringing tenor songs, that she might play the accompaniments for him, because, he said, Miss Maberley, the Rector's sister, played so dreadfully out of time; he really *couldn't* get along with her, and *would* Miss Jeanie just go through one or two of them with him, to keep up his practice? A tenor voice got down so soon without practice. And Jeanie, being very kind-hearted, was willing to please him, even to the extent of a whole evening's performance, though she could have employed the time, as she thought, so much more pleasantly in some other way.

Mr. Allington was a cultivated man, too, knew all about the classics, and had a large acquaintance with any new books that happened to be making a stir in literary circles. And he was much more of a gentleman in his dress and bearing than Mr. Deeping, though Jeanie *had* heard him say things sometimes about his sisters that she felt sure Hugh Deeping would never have said of any woman. When *he* spoke of his mother and sister, he did it with such a quiet reverence as those old Englishmen who believed in a woman's truth and goodness might have spoken of their mothers and sisters. She would like sometimes to have talked to him about this sister of his, it must be hard for him to be so far away from her; only Aunt Lyneton always seemed to check her if she asked him any questions about his home life. It was not their place, she said, to know any thing more of him than that he was gentlemanly, and trustworthy, and honorable in the position which he had to fill at Lyneton Abbots.

Thus far Jeanie used to get in her own private meditations during those Saturday evening readings. Then, perhaps, looking up, she found Hugh Deeping's eyes upon her, and she would turn away into the shadow of the great black marble chimney-piece, so that he could not see her face any more. For she felt as if he must have known what she was thinking about, and she did not want him to know.

But one Saturday, after the weekly balancing of the accounts, Mr. Lyneton had gone over to the Rectory, and Hugh came, as he was bidden, into the oriel-room, where Miss Lyneton and her niece sat at their work. And for the reading that night they chose the volume of "Percy's Reliques," which contained the ballad of the "Nut-browne Mayde," that same volume which Jeanie had come to fetch out of the libr

y the first time she ever saw Mr. Deeping, more than three months ago now. Was that why she so often chose it for him to read? Was that why it seemed to him the pleasantest of all the books on those old library shelves? And here in the blazing fire-light, though, truly, Hugh needed none of its help to see what he knew so well by heart, he began to read that sweet simple old rhyme, surely the sweetest and simplest that ever true heart wove:

He. My destiny is for to dye
A shamefull deth, I trowe;
Or elles to flè; the one must be,
None other way I knowe.
But to withdrawe as an outlawe,
And take me to my bowe.
Wherfore adue! my owne hart true,
None other rede I can.
For I must to the grenewode go,
Alone, a banyshed man.

She. O Lord! what is this worldys blysse,
That changeth as the mone.
My somer's day, in lusty May,
Is derked before the none.
I here you say, farewell, nay, nay,
We depart not so sone.
Why say ye so? wheder wyll ye go?
Alas! what have ye done?
All my welfare to sorrowe and care,
Sholde change if ye were gone:
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone.

* * * * * *

Sith I have here bene partynère
With you of joye and blysse,
I muste, alsoe, parte of your wo
Endure, as reason is.
Yet am I sure of one plesure,
And, shortely, it is this:
That where ye be, it semeth pardè,
I colde not fare amysse;
Without more speche I you beseche,
That we were sone agone,
For, in my mynde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone.

Hugh stopped and turned round to make some remark to Miss Lyneton.

But she had gone away. The words came too near her heart for quiet listening to them. Only that morning the Indian letter had come, containing its usual detail of barrack life and gayety, a very long account of a ball at the Residency, and a brilliant description of the music and dresses. But there was no message for Gwendoline, nor any meaning hidden for herself alone within those seeming common sentences. Was Maurice Demeron forgetting, then? Or was he trying her if she could be true and constant as the Nut-browne Mayde?

"I think you need not wait for my aunt to come back again," said Jeanie. "She knows the poem well enough, for we often read it by ourselves. I like it the best of them all."

"Why do you like it?"

"Because it is so true. I am sure a good man wrote it."

"Do you think any woman would do all that for any man, now?"

"Yes. I am sure Aunt Lyneton could."

"Could you?"

But Jeanie flashed her face away from him into the shadow, not without a little touch of impatience. *Why did Mr. Deeping* ask her that? What consequence was it to him whether she could love any one as the Nut-browne Mayde did? And she would not choose that volume any more for them to read, if he stopped and asked her questions.

So he went on, the book lying uselessly enough on the little reading-desk beside him, for there was no longer fire-light enough to decipher the quaint old spelling. And still Jeanie thought, as she listened, that none but the poet who first dreamed the noble story of a woman's truth, could have read it as Hugh Deeping did:

She. Now sith that ye have showed to me
The secret of your mynde,
I shall be playne with you agayne,
Lyke as ye shall me fynde.
Sith it is so that ye will go
I woll not leve behynde,
Shall never be sayde, the Nut-browne Mayde
Was to her love unkynde.
Make you ready, for so am I,
Although it were anone;
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone.

He. For an outlawe this is the lawe,
That men hym take and bynde,
Without pytè, hanged to be;
And waver with the wynde.
If I had neede, as God forbede,
What rescous colde ye fynde?
Forsoth I trowe, ye and your bowe
For fere wolde drawe behynde:
And no mervayle, for little avayle
Were in your councele then,
Wherfore I will to the grenwode go,
Alone, a banyshed man.

She. Ryte well knowe ye that women be
But feeble for the fyght;
No womanhede it is indede,
To be bold as a knyght.
Yet in such fere, eff that ye were,
With enemyes day or nyght,
I wolde withstande with bowe in hande,
To greve them as I might.
And you to save, as women have,
From deth fulle many a one;
For in my mynde of all mankynde,
I love but you alone.

* * * * * * *

And though that I of ancestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have you proved how I you loved
A squyer of lowe degrè.
And ever shall, whatso befall,
To-day therefore anone;
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone.

Jeanie's face was toward him again now in the dim fire-light. As he read that last verse, their eyes met in one long questioning glance.

And this time, if Jeanie turned her face away, it was not for impatience.

CHAPTER XXIV.

When Miss Lyneton came back half an hour later, calm, collected as ever, Jeanie was alone; seated on the low cushion by Mr. Lyneton's empty chair, beside her, on the hearth-rug, a volume of "Percy's Reliques," open still at the ballad of the "Nut-browne Mayde." There was no longer fire-light enough to read it, though,

nor enough, as Jeanie sat there in the shadow cast by the heavy marble chimney-piece, for Gwendoline to notice the new look of happy trustful content which rested on her face.

Not the complacent satisfaction of the business-like young lady of modern society, who has just put the finishing touch to a successful matrimonial bargain, and so protected herself against the terrible contingency of being "left behind" in the ranks of unappropriated spinsterhood. Not the polished smile of the carefully-trained belle, who sees in the precious treasure which has been placed at her disposal, the necessary and trifling preliminary to what she views as the ultimatum of a woman's happiness, a brilliant establishment, and an imposing array of servants, carriages, and dresses; nor yet the carelessly-worn triumph of the coquette, who has brought another captive to her feet, and added one more to the train of willing cavaliers who wait upon her caprices. Jeanie's was just the quiet gladness of a loving heart, which, knowing itself beloved, asks no more, and looks no further.

She was a very unworldly little creature, quite inexperienced in those social conventions which most girls who have seen much of life take up and work into their own characters so readily. She had her own primitive, noble thoughts about all these things. She had her own little air-castles, built on the foundation of those old ballads and romances, but quite different from the modern style of architecture, as employed in fashionable erections of that sort. Then, happily for herself, perhaps, she had no young lady friend to talk to about these things. Spending her whole life in the seclusion of that old Manor House, she had never had but one companion of her own age, Rose Beresford, the little Killarney girl, who had come to visit her for a few weeks at the Rectory. Rose was a bright, quick, merry girl, but it was several years now since she came to the Rectory. They were both children then, not yet advanced to the dignity of long frocks, much addicted to swinging, and playing pranks with the old serving-man, who declared that they almost teased the life out of him, they were so full of tricks and nonsense.

Yet with a touch of romance about them even then, for they would sit for hours together on those stone dolphins under the fountain urn, composing marvellous pieces of poetry about valiant knights, who came, to the imminent peril of their necks, over moats and draw-bridges to woo beautiful ladies in haunted castles. Only, as the measures had a vexatious trick of halting, and the last words in the lines never could be got to rhyme with any thing like propriety, the story generally stuck fast in the middle, never getting further than the lady's consent—after which her father's wrath, and her own tears, and a great performance with carrier doves, *or trusty waiting*-maids, ought to *have come—wound up at last* with a grand wedding, with a very long train of brides-maids, all so beautifully arranged in the juvenile author's imagination, if only those rhymes would not have been so unmanageable.

But that was years ago. And girls change so much even in a few years. Perhaps, if Jeanie were to see Rose Beresford now, they would not care for each other so much, or find a pleasure in talking about these things. The years that had kept Jeanie so closely folded up in that village home of hers might have expanded Rose Beresford into a gay, flirtish, fascinating maiden, fond of coquetting, and making conquests, as these town-bred young ladies sometimes are. Quite different from the little pinafored girl who used to swing, and play pranks with the serving-man, and write romances under the fountain urn.

And that was the only friendship Jeanie had ever had the chance of making, so the old books in her father's library, the ballads, and legends, and histories, had been her companions ever since Rose went away.

Only these; for, as the aforementioned gossips, the lawyer's wife, and the doctor's wife, and the widows, and maiden ladies, who lived on small annuities and large pretensions, used to say, the Lynetons were such a very exclusive set. Really they lived like nuns in that tumble-down old Manor House, and seemed to think no one good enough to associate with them. Indeed, they were far too exclusive for their own interests, for every one knew there was nothing like going into society, and bringing one's attractions, whether of face, or manner, or pedigree, judiciously into the market, with a view to disposing of them there to the best customer, as neither Mr. Lyneton's sister nor Miss Jeanie had ever done.

So said Mrs. Jacques, the lawyer's wife, to Mrs. Lucombe, the doctor's wife. Miss Juliana, Mrs. Jacques's fifth daughter, was just finishing at a fashionable boarding-school in Paris. Mrs. Jacques had great faith in Parisian schools. She always said they gave such a splended finish to a girl's manners, and rubbed off all that silly English nonsense about reserve and simplicity, and put her in a much better way of attaining a position for herself in the world. Four of her girls had already secured carriages and an income of fifteen hundred a year, to say nothing of mixing in the wealthiest circles of Oresbridge, and she attributed their success to nothing so much as their Parisian finish, which gave them such advantages over the rest of the Oresbridge young ladies.

"Finish, you know, my dear Mrs. Lucombe, is every thing for a girl now. A girl is an absolute nonentity in genteel circles, unless you give her a Parisian finish."

And then Mrs. Jaques said it was a thousand pities Mr. Lyneton had not given that girl of his the advantage of a year or two on the Continent. It would have done her such a world of good, and rubbed off all that foolish nonsense about seclusion and retirement. Seclusion and retire

ment, indeed; as if girls ought not to be educated with a view to making an impression in society, and securing brilliant settlements! That was what *she* had had in her mind all along in the bringing up of *her* daughters, and she believed no one had been more successful than herself in getting them well established.

But Mrs. Jacques was quite mistaken if she thought that no hand had been reached out in attempt to pluck the little flower that bloomed so sweetly in the shelter of the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

Though Jeanie, perhaps on account of her father's failing fortunes, was never so much in request as Gwendoline used to be in the days of her girlhood, before Maurice Demeron won her heart, and carried it away with him to the far-off Indian Residency, Mr. Lyneton had had more than a few lengthy consultations in that wainscoted library, on matters very nearly connected with his young daughter's happiness; consultations which ended, as almost all consultations that ever took place in the old library were destined to end, grievously enough for those who came to seek them there, but not at all grievously for Mr. Lyneton, who would fain keep his pet child with him as long as he could.

And now this young Martin Allington, who had come to the Rectory to read with the clergyman, was continually hovering round the house, evidently intent on the same errand; else why should he so often chance to meet the ladies in their daily country walks, and why should his studies lead him so constantly to the old folios in Mr. Lyneton's library, when Mr. Maberley, being a man of literary tastes and ample means, would of course have his own study furnished with every thing that was needful for the young man's college preparations? And why, if Gwendoline chanced to look up from her prayer-book in the old church pew, should she so often find Martin Allington's eyes fixed on Jeanie's face; and why should he loiter under the yew-trees, Sunday after Sunday, to meet them coming out, instead of going home at once with the clergyman, whose garden gate was on the other side of the church, quite away from the grassy foot-path which led to the Manor House?

Miss Lyneton was disposed to look favorably on young Allington's suit. He was a man of good character, fair prospects, and an ancestral line which owned some names as noble as their own. True, he was not a person of shining talents, nor one who would ever give his family and friends great cause to be proud of him; but there was much genial kind-heartedness about his nature, a love of home and home enjoyments, which, after, all, goes further to make life's real content than the genius which only shines abroad and the brilliant intellect which lights up every fireside save its own.

However, Martin Allington's position was already made. A rich country living in the gift of his uncle, Sir William Allington, was waiting *for him to take possession of it as soon as his university course was completed.* There, with a noble old parsonage house and a pleasant circle of cultivated people in the immediate neighborhood, and the county town with all its advantages within easy reach, life for Martin Allington, and whosoever he chose to share it with him, might be a very pleasant thing. There would be no long painful years of waiting then for his promised wife, none of the weary suspense which, though no one knew it, had sadly bittered her own life.

No such hard trial of truth either. For Gwendoline thought that Jeanie, simple, child-like, with no great firmness or strength in that gentle nature of hers, would never hold fast, as she had done, to a hope that tarried so long, and a love that asked for so much faith to keep it leal and true. Better that she should early pass into the care of some kind heart, than learn, through long years of patient waiting, how to suffer and be strong. Would suffering make her strong, though? Would it not rather crush her? For that which roots the young tree, only tears up the little flowers which grow beneath it?

Gwendoline came and sat by Jeanie in the oaken chair, drawing the child's head down upon her knee, as she often did when they sat alone there in that oriel-room. It seemed so natural to pet and caress Jeanie Lyneton. Stroking the soft light brown hair which waved over her forehead, her aunt was reminded of the long ago years when she, scarce a woman then, but stronger and more fiery-hearted than ever Jeanie would be, used to sit by her sister's knee, and feel the touch of soft hands upon her cheek, and hear the tones of a sweet voice, which seemed to fall into the restless soul like dew when the long summer day is over. All the care—all the cherishing which Gwendoline Lyneton could remember, had been given to her by Jeanie's mother. She had never felt the influence of a loving woman's nature, save in those few years, the true seed-time of her life, when the second Mrs. Lyneton bore rule in that home of Lyneton Abbots. And now she would fain pay back, if not with like motherly love, for that, she felt, could never be, yet with tender, faithful care, the years of nurture which had been spent upon herself. Could she be kinder, then, than to smooth the path of one who would be a kind and loving husband to her?—who would shield her safely from all toil and danger, and make her life one long pleasant summer day of unbroken peace?

"Jeanie, papa said he should perhaps bring Mr. Allington over with him to-night."

"Well?"

"And you have never practiced the song he took so much trouble to bring you from Oresbridge."

"I can not help it. I did not want him to get it for me, and I do not like it so very much."

"But he will be annoyed if you can not sing it to him to-night. Shall I play it over for you now, before they come in?"

"No, thank you," and Jeanie shook her head impatiently—"I dont want to sing to-night."

"And you do want to disappoint Mr. Allington?"

"No. I don't want to disappoint any one, only—"

Gwendoline said no more, and there fell another long silence between them. Her thoughts might have drifted away to the shores of India, where Maurice Demeron was counting the months until he came home. Not so many months now—only until these trees, through whose bare branches the January wind came sighing so dismally, had put on their robes of July beauty, drooping again with all their green wealth of leaf and blossom. The five long years had nearly worn themselves away. The love that had waited so patiently would be crowned at last, and Gwendoline's life would break forth with the golden summer-time into beauty and perfectness.

But where had Jeanie's thoughts strayed? and what dream-castles had she been building for herself as she sat there in the fire-light, with her face hidden in the shadow of the oaken chair? For she was the first to break that long silence, and she broke it with words that, like the restless flutter of the little bird, betray how near its nest is.

"Aunt Lyneton, what a pity it was that Mr. Deeping could not go to Tübingen and finish his college course."

Miss Lyneton did not know that her brother's clerk had ever contemplated any college course at Tübingen, and therefore its interruption caused her but little grief. Yet, somehow, those words of Jeanie's ruffled her, and she wished the child had not spoken them.

CHAPTER XXV.

Mrs. Mallinson was free to confess—so she said to her husband—that, except in a monetary point of view, the gentleman they had secured for breakfast and tea was not so promising a speculation as had been anticipated.

Mr. Deeping had occupied the front sitting-room and bedroom now for five months, had been treated like one of the family in every respect, made free of the back parlor whenever he chose to come down in an evening and join Sarah Matilda at her practicing, and invited to take a seat with them in the pew on a Sunday, without ever such a thing being mentioned as his paying rent for it. Which, as Mrs. Mallinson observed, was clear five shillings a quarter out of their pockets; because, though Mr. Deeping had not been more than three or four times since he came to Canton House, still, if he were not under permission to go, they might have let the sitting to some one else. And, indeed, it had been in the list of vacancies for some months past, though without finding a suitable occupant. Gentlemen were scarce in the Grosmont Road *congregation*, and Mrs. Mallinson *was particular for a gentleman*, because of his not taking up so much room. And whenever Sarah Matilda had a friend or two in to tea, there was always an invitation sent up to the front sitting-room for Mr. Deeping to join them, if he felt disposed, or sometimes it was suggested that the entire party should adjourn to his room, it being larger than the back parlor, and more convenient for company, except not having the piano. Indeed, Mrs. Mallinson said that if he had been her own son, she could not have laid herself out more to make him feel that he was received into the bosom of the family; and especially since she had heard, from one of the Grosmont Road members, who had a son in the Bellona iron works, that Mr. Deeping had had an advance of salary, in consequence of giving such satisfaction to his employers, and that the advance was to be continued gradually so long as he remained in his present situation.

But, up to the present time, all this diligent attention to the new lodger's comfort had been as bread cast upon the waters. As yet Mr. Deeping showed no disposition to acquaint himself with the peculiarities of the body which had detached itself from the old Park Street congregation; neither, by attendance at any of its numerous tea-meetings and bazars and public opportunities of all kinds, did he manifest any sympathy with its views and opinions, nor, by living up to his privileges in the use of the pew, and cushions, and hymn-books, did he seek to indentify himself with those who were burning and shining lights in the Oresbridge split.

And Sarah Matilda's music might have fallen on the desert air, for any effect which it seemed to have in attracting him more frequently to that back parlor, whence its dulcet strains generally rose after he had come home for the evening. Indeed, he seemed disposed to keep himself altogether to himself, making scarcely any use of the privileges and opportunities which most young men in his position would have valued so highly.

Mrs. Mallinson partly attributed this unsatisfactory state of affairs to Mr. Deeping's occupation at Lyneton Abbots. He had never been quite himself since that first evening, more than three month ago now, when he came home unusually late, and said that he had been spending the evening with Mr. Lyneton. It had put high-flown notions into the young man's haed, making him think that, as he was received on a level with the Manor House people, he was quite too superior for any thing like familiar social intercourse with parties who were engaged in business. Such ridiculous nonsense, indeed! As if the Manor House people would ever think of such a thing as placing him upon a level with themselves. As if Mr. Lyneton, who, every one knew, was as full of pride as he could hold, and poor too, so that he could scarcely keep himself on his feet, had paid any little attention to Mr. Deeping for any other purpose than screwing a few hours extra work out of him, or perhaps getting him to feel more interest in the estate than he would

do if he worked at it as a mere stranger. Selfishness—nothing but selfishness! Mrs. Mallinson thought it did not require very much penetration to find that out, and if Mr. Deeping's eyes had not been blinded by the dust which Mr. Lyneton had thrown into them, he would have found it out, too! Mrs. Mallinson had seen too much of the world to believe in disinterested kindness, shown to people who had no means of returning it; and poor Mr. Deeping would find himself painfully mistaken if he thought that Mr. Lyneton's friendship went any deeper than his own advantage. Selfishness, that was just what it was — nothing but selfishness! And, indeed, why should it be any thing else? Had not every one a right to do the best he could for himself, and for the denomination which he belonged to, and for the people to whom he was bound by the ties of duty and affection?

And Mrs. Mallinson, who had so much experience of the world, and who knew so exactly how to make her way in it, would like to have given her new lodger a motherly hint or two about not allowing himself to be too much elevated with the little kindness that had been shown him by the Lyneton people. Only he was so terribly stiff about his own affairs, and seemed to think it quite an intrusion if she came forward with any remarks of a personal nature. Of course when a young man came into a respectable family, where there was an only daughter, with an education like Sarah Matilda's, and the best of prospects, having the entire property and the good-will of the business to look forward to, it was only natural that her parents should wish to know a little about him, and how his friends were situated, and if he had a mother and sisters, and if they were left independent, which she didn't think Mr. Deeping's mother and sister were, or he wouldn't be so particular in his expenditure, never getting fashionable fancy ties, or jewelry, or other things that most young men have a weakness for; and whether he intended to keep in the iron line, and was there any prospect of his being took as a partner, when the present Mr. Sparkes, who had no family, dropped off, and left the concern in Mr. Feverige's hands?

Upon all of which important points Mrs. Mallinson had carefully probed her new lodger, but with the scantiest possible results. For instead of taking her remarks as any proof of motherly interest, and unbosoming himself to her, as she fully expected he would do when she gave him the opportunity, he had drawn himself up with an air of dignity, and put her off with short indefinite answers, or interrupted her with some questions quite wide of the mark—and, indeed, conducted himself in such a manner as quite to alienate her. And she really did not think it would have been such a very great misfortune after all, if Mrs. Green, who kept the grocer's shop a little further down the road on the opposite *side, had secured him.*

So Mrs. Mallinson said, with many parenthetical sniffs, as she bustled about in the back parlor one Monday morning, clearing out the furniture and tearing down the curtains, preparatory to the general cleaning, which always took place in February, so as to have the house in trim for the county ball, the first week in March.

Mrs. Mallinson had had no applications for her rooms as yet, but she had sent advertisements to the Oresbridge papers, intimating that a lady, or two ladies, requiring accommodation for the ball, might meet with the same on reasonable terms at No. 19 Grosmont Road. And so a few days before the great event took place, a lady, who had come to spend the winter at the neighbouring town of Grantford, did apply, and engaged the accommodation for herself and her daughter.

There was a difficulty, though. Canton House only contained one other "let," besides that already hired by Mr. Deeping, and this let consisted of a single bedroom, showily furnished, but quite insufficient for ball-room company, who always required the use of a sitting-room as well. However, Mrs. Mallinson was not disposed to lose her five guineas for so trifling an obstacle as that, and after a cabinet council in the back parlor, it was agreed upon that Mr. Deeping should be requested to vacate his sitting-room for one day, placing it at the disposal of the lady and her daughter, while he made himself at home with the family in the back parlor. And Hugh, being of an obliging turn of mind, agreed, only mentally resolving to spend as little time as possible in the company of Sarah Matilta and the forty-guinea piano.

Which, as Mrs. Mallinson remarked, was really very kind of him—the agreement, not the mental resolve—and almost made her regret the acrimonious train of reflection into which she had been led while preparing for the general cleaning. And indeed she would not have thought of putting Mr. Deeping about to such an extent, for it was always her wish to give people the full amount of what they paid for, only the cause at Grosmont Road required so much keeping up, and Mr. Mallinson's hand was almost always in his pocket for bazars, or tea-trays, or guineas for the plate when he took the chair at public meetings, which he was so very frequently called upon to do, being, as she might say, such a leading man in the congregation. And a great proof of respect, too, and she always felt proud to see him standing behind that table on the Grosmont Road platform, surrounded by the other more influential members of the congregation, and in his best suit, too, with one hand behind him, and the other holding the notes of his speech, which always began—

"My Christian friends. In acknowledging the honor which you have done me in calling me to the chair on this interesting occasion."

At that stage of the proceedings Mrs. Mallinson's feelings generally overcame her, and she was obliged to bury her face in her pocket-handkerchief, their pew being in such a conspicuous situation, and the eyes of the congregation being, as she might say, upon her. Of course that

sort of thing was very pleasant, and she liked to see her husband's name in the bills, and on the great placards by the chapel gates; but at the same time it ran away with a great deal of money, and the business not being quite so good as it used to be—not from providential judgment, nothing of the kind—but only because trade was rather flat in Oresbridge just now, it really behooved people to make a little extra profit when the chance came in their way. And as the lady and her daughter only required the use of the room for a few hours, just a late dinner when they came in, and a cup of coffee when they returned from the ball, and breakfast next morning before they went back again to Grantford, scarcely a day altogether, she thought that in consideration of all the kindness that had been shown him since he came to Canton House, Mr. Deeping need not complain.

So the house underwent a complete purification; carpets up, curtains down, front windows painted, new blinds fitted, furniture rubbed till it shone again, and the whole place made to look like a new pin, quite outshining for beauty and freshness any thing done by Mrs. Green, who also made a very feeble effort to take in company at the county ball, but only succeeded in getting a stray gentleman or two, who were not so particular as ladies about their accommodation, and who perhaps had been sent to her just at the last moment from the overfull hotel on the other side of the road.

The last of these preparations was scarcely completed, and Mrs. Mallinson in her black silk gown and fuchsia cap had just seated herself in the front window to watch for the company, when a cab drove up to the door. Out of it there alighted a tall, rather ponderous lady of about five-and-fifty, elegantly but quietly dressed; and after her a young girl, dark-haired, rosy-cheeked, whose dainty little silver-mounted reticule bore the inscription—Rose Beresford.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It was the night of the county ball. The streets of Oresbridge were noisy with the crested carriages of the county people, who came from many an old baronial hall and storied castle, to bring their point lace and family diamonds to this, the one select assemblage of Oresbridge high life. The other balls were for any one who had wealth enough to make a splendid appearance at them; this was exclusively for the county families and their friends.

Could Hugh Deeping have stood at the window of his sitting-room to-night, he would certainly not have complained of the dullness of Grosmont Road; for the usual prospect of milk-girls and penny piemen, singing women and white-pinafored beggar children, was varied now by glitter of equipages, within which the *gas-light, flashing into* them from the shop *windows, revealed sheen* of satin and glow of scarlet draperies, with sparkle of jewelled tiara on many a stately head, or gleam of ivory fans toyed with by white-gloved hands, which would by and by be clasped in the dance with those of uniformed officers or aristocratic civilians.

But Hugh was not looking out of his sitting-room window to-night. Better for him, perhaps, if he had been. Better if Mrs. Beresford and her daughter Rose had never chanced to come to the county ball, or coming, had spent their spare time elsewhere than in that front room of his. Tired at last of Mrs. Mallinson's interminable paragraphs, and Sarah Matilda's pretty commonplaces, and having no other companions in Oresbridge with whom he could spend his evening, he strolled down that quiet country road into which his steps seemed almost to turn by instinct, and scarce thinking whither he went, rambled on and on until the lights from the windows of the old house at Lyneton Abbots flickered down upon him through the bare elm-tree boughs.

That was a busy night at Lyneton Abbots, too, for Jeanie and her aunt were going with Mr. Lyneton to the ball. It was Jeanie's first introduction into the fashionable world, and, girl-like, she had spent many wondering thoughts over it. For they lived such a very quiet, secluded life in that old-fashioned home. Once in four or five months Mr. Lyneton gave a formal dinner, to which the clergyman and some of the county people came—people who were in the habit of going to London for the season, and therefore had a little to say of how things were stirring there. And when the return dinners were given, the rumbling family chariot, so seldom used now, was drawn up in front of the stone door-way, and Jeanie stood by, looking admiringly on, while Miss Lyneton, with her mother's diamonds glittering on her velvet dress, used to take her brother's arm, and sweep across the matted hall, just as the Lyneton ladies might have done centuries ago, when the fortunes of the family were in their prime. But that was all Jeanie knew of gay life. She had never been in a ball-room, never glided white-robed through quadrille after quadrille, keeping time to the strains of merry dance-music, while all round and about her there floated the hum of soft voices and scent of flowers, mingled with the bright smiles of the dancers, and low-whispered words, which could so lightly be spoken, and so lightly be forgotten. Jeanie knew nothing of this, and now for the first time she was going to see it all.

She stood by her dressing-table in one of those old dormer-windowed rooms, twisting a spray of ivy-leaves in her hair. They contrasted prettily enough with its pale brown tresses, so like those of the first Mrs. Lyneton's cousin, but shadowing a face so different; for Gwendoline's even, level brows and straight Grecian features told of steady purpose, and quiet, controlled will. Her face seldom changed from its pale stillness into the rosy flush of bright expectancy; while Jeanie's was variab

as the surface of some wind-stirred lake, yet ever, when the breeze had passed, true mirror of blue sky and fleecy cloud and purple bloom of sunset.

With genuine girl-like eagerness she had come up to prepare long before the time of starting; and when the last finishing touches had been given, and the folds of her white dress looped up by the maid's skillful hands with clusters of ivy-leaves and berries, and when the full flowing cloak, with its dainty garniture of white fur, had been put on, and the fan, and tablets, and tiny perfumed handkerchief all laid ready, there remained still a full hour to the time when Mr. Lyneton had ordered the carriage to come round. So she went down stairs to the oriel-room, deserted now, except by Rollo, the Newfoundland dog, who was stretching himself, with the leisurely laziness of advanced life, on the hearth-rug

With a warm, pleasant glow, the fire-light shone upon the carved oak furniture, and lighted up the old family portraits, which, in all the glory of ruffs, and powder, and court suits, hung upon the wainscoted walls. Just so pleasantly had it shone there two months ago, when she and Hugh Deeping—none but they two—had read that ballad of the "Nut-browne Mayde," and then, in a silence sweeter far than speech, had learned that it was true.

Two months ago. And life held so many golden memories for them since then. Memories which brightened all Hugh's daily toil, and made the hours pass for Jeanie in a music so sweet that, listening to it, she took no count of time. Not memories of quiet walks together, or solitary half-hours, in which, hand to hand, and heart to heart, they might hold sweet speech of years to come. Not once in all that two months had Hugh and Jeanie been alone together again. But there were still those Saturday evening readings, when she knew so well the story was for her; when, in quaint rhyme of olden poet, Hugh told her all that he would fain have said, and she listened with a smile whose meaning Gwendoline guessed as little as Jeanie knew the wherefore of that other smile which came sometimes upon her aunt's face for hope of Maurice Demeron's return.

But she was soon tired of waiting in the oriel-room, and the old clock, chiming from the staircase, told that there wanted still half an hour to the time of starting; so, wrapping her cloak round her, she stole out into the door-way to wait there.

Hugh, standing under the old stone griffins, saw her there, the little white figure, like some fay or fairy, hovering in the track of light that poured out from the wide hall into the garden; the ivy-leaves and berries glistening in her hair, one little gloved hand gathering up the folds of her cloak, the fair young face bending forward into the gloom with such a look of eager, girlish longing.

Jeanie, the little Jeanie who belonged to *him, so near, yet so far off,* whose hand his own must thrust so much aside to reach. He knew that in another hour's time the thousand lights of the Oresbridge Assembly Rooms would be shining down on that bright head; he knew that Martin Allington would be asking her to dance—Martin Allington, the nephew of a baronet, rich, handsome, nobly born, with a comfortable rectory waiting for him as soon as his university course was over. He had heard it all discussed, for Mrs. Mallinson had acquaintances in the village who could tell her plenty of Lyneton Abbots gossip, and young Mr. Allington had not gone in and out of that gate-way where Hugh now stood, and accompanied the ladies from time to time in their daily walks, and at church turned aside from his prayer-book so often to gaze on Jeanie's quiet, unconscious face, without the people drawing their own conclusions therefrom, and giving those conclusions the full benefit of open discussion.

She would be dancing with Martin Allington, then, and other courtly gentlemen would smile upon her, and flatter her, and whisper sweet words into her ear, while he, Hugh Deeping, went back to his little room in Grosmont Road, his little room over the provision-dealer's shop, with its imitation Venetian blinds, and its make-believe maple furniture, and its sham Parian statuettes, and its everlasting smell of coffee and bacon. What a difference! And Hugh began to feel, almost more than he had ever felt before, the cold crystal barrier of caste shining up between them.

Yet he was not afraid. He could have trusted that Jeanie of his anywhere and everywhere. He could have let her go from him, away out of that quiet home into the busiest, gayest life, feeling that she would come back to him again true as ever, not a single leaf fallen from the fair flower of her love. Or, if he had to go to the world's end, and toil there for many a year, he knew that, returning, he would find her faithful still; such trust he had in her, so truly did that fearless look of hers tell all that words had never spoken.

And still Jeanie stood there in the open doorway, looking out into the gloom, her white cloak wrapped around her, the ivy-leaves glistening in her light hair. Hugh Deeping could not stay any longer at the gate. Very gently he stole across the garden, and coming behind her, laid his hand upon her shoulder.

She looked brightly up into his face.

"You did not startle me so very much. I was thinking about you."

There was no need to hide that now; no fear for him to know where her thoughts could find so sure a rest.

"You look very beautiful, Jeanie—may I call you Jeanie? You know, I have never seen you look like this before."

And Hugh glanced down at her dainty white-robed figure, too pure it almost seemed for touch of his; this little high-born maiden, whose beauty was the outflowering of centuries of culture. And then he thought of himself, rich

only in his own strong right hand and cunning brain, in power of thought and strength of will to do and bear.

"Jeanie," he said, "you seem too far away from me."

But Jeanie only answered with a low musical laugh, and just one bright look, which made him take that gloved hand and hold it to his lips for a single moment.

They were still standing there in the open door-way, beneath the statue of Abbot Siward, who spoke no word of all that he heard and saw from that niche of his, when Miss Lyneton came sweeping down the broad staircase, in all her cool, lustrous beauty.

And very beautiful she did look, though not for the diamonds that were shining among the folds of her pale yellow hair, nor yet for the costly lace which many and many a Lyneton lady had worn with as much grace as she wore it now. Nor was it the thought of any conquest to be achieved that evening at the county ball, or any admiration to be won from the brilliant company there, that brought a light into the usually quiet gray eyes, and a touch of rose into the pale cheeks. Last time she went to the Oresbridge county ball, five years ago, Maurice Demeron had been there. Next time she went, he would be home again; for were not the trees just ready to bud now? And long before their leaves fell his ship would have sailed.

Half-way down the staircase she paused. In the track of light outside the door she could see the gleam of Jeanie's white dress. Impatient child! Was she so eager, then, to be dancing with Martin Allington, that she must needs away, so lightly clad, into the March gloom to wait for the carriage? And yet Gwendoline remembered that she had waited as impatiently herself five years ago. She was just hastening forward to call her in out of the cold, when she caught sight of Hugh Deeping.

Hugh Deeping and her niece, Jeanie, standing together; her hand in his, her face downcast for the earnest look he bent upon it. And was that a flush of gladness that it wore, or pride, the old Lyneton pride, kindling on her cheek, because he, so lowly born, dared to speak to her thus? In that flickering light Gwendoline could not tell.

She drew back a step or two; then with lips more tightly closed than was their wont, and with a grave, steady look, she came down stairs into the oriel-room.

When her niece joined her five minutes after, to say the carriage was waiting, Miss Lyneton stood by the fire drawing on her gloves. And as she smoothed down Jeanie's hair, and arranged those glistening ivy-leaves, and said, "You are thoughtless, Jeanie, to stand out in the cold so long—" no one could have heard a touch of anger in her voice. For it was not the way of the Lyneton people to make such ado over any thing.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The county ball was a very brilliant affair, the most successful that had been held for many years, so the Oresbridge papers said next day. Of course the Oresbridge papers meant, by that, that "dancing was kept up with great spirit until an early hour in the morning," that "supper was provided by Messrs. Blank & Blank, with their usual taste and elegance," that "the decorations, which were under the management of Messrs. Some-one-else, were of the most exquisite description," that "the dresses were splendid, the music superb, and the assemblage of rank, beauty and fashion such as had rarely been gathered before in those Assembly Rooms." That was what the Oresbridge papers meant when they said the county ball was so very successful.

But it produced results in another direction which either might or might not be considered successful, according to taste.

Almost the first people that the Lyneton Abbots party met were Mr. Allington and his uncle, Sir William Allington, of Barton Firs, with whom he was to return to town next week, having completed his course of reading with the Rector. And then, greatly to their surprise, they encountered Mrs. Beresford and her daughter Rose.

Rose, Jeanie's child friend, the only child friend she had ever had. Little Miss Rose, who, the last time they parted, was a mischievous, hoydenish girl of eleven or twelve, notable for tearing her frocks, and playing pranks with old Grey the serving-man, and jumping over the stone dolphins, or sitting upon them and composing romantic stanzas which never could be brought to a successful termination. Mischievous now, too, if one might judge from the merry sparkle in her bright dark eyes, only a different sort of mischief, more fatal, perhaps, than the other. But not hoydenish at all. She had grown into a tall, elegant girl, with a singular fascination in her manners, a mingling of archness and playfulness, which being completely her own, sat very gracefully upon her. Indeed, among all the high-born beauties, blonde and brunette, who thronged the Oresbridge Assembly Rooms on that night of the county ball, none excited more attention or won more admiration than Miss Beresford, the young Irish lady, who now showed her smiles and scattered her bright looks there for the first time.

Of course it was a very happy meeting. Rose, who never made any pretense of concealing her feelings under the garb of aristocratic self-possession, was overjoyed at meeting her old friend again so unexpectedly. It really was such a very unlooked-for pleasure. Indeed it was by the merest chance that her mamma had come to the ball at all, only they had had such a stupid, dull life for the last three months out there at Grantford, where Mrs. Beresford had taken apartments for the sake of the vapor baths, being somewhat of an invalid; and Rose felt as if she could not endure any longer without seeing a

little society beyond the very limited circle, chiefly valetudinarians and elderly widows, that they met with out there. And so she persuaded her mamma to accept the invitation, and for once make a little effort to rouse herself. For, as Rose said, she did so enjoy a ball now and then, it was the only chance she had of seeing fresh people, and getting a little of the rust and dullness rubbed off. Life at Grantford was such a terribly stupid affair, so very different to Dublin, where they spent last winter. There was such a delightful succession of gayeties in Dublin. One need never spend an evening at home there, unless from choice.

And then Mrs. Beresford and Rose took possession of Jeanie, leaving Mr. Lyneton and his sister Gwendoline to their own devices for a season.

Not a very long season. Scarcely half an hour could have elapsed before the portly Irish lady chaperoned Jeanie back again to that sheltered arcade near the supper-room, where Mr. and Miss Lyneton were engaged in earnest conversation. Yet long enough for many plans to have been discussed, and some things decided upon, which should place matters upon quite a different footing at Lyneton Abbots.

Jeanie danced once with Mr. Allington, in the same quadrille with Miss Lyneton and Sir William. Gwendoline watched her closely. She seemed bright and happy, pleased rather than otherwise with the preference which he took no pains to conceal. And when, after the quadrille was over, Sir William took her under his wing, and, in company with his nephew, sauntered about the room, she chatted in just her own simple girlish way, first to one, and then to another of them, seeming to enjoy the novelty of the scene, and to enter into it as completely as if her whole heart was there. Surely that meeting which, an hour or two ago, Miss Lyneton had so unwittingly and unwillingly witnessed, had been of Hugh Deeping's seeking, and his only!

After that the Lyneton people, Mrs. Beresford and Rose, with young Martin Allington and his uncle, made a little coterie by themselves in one of the cool, evergreen-decorated arcades, and there chatted away merrily enough, while the dancers floated past them. Miss Lyneton arranged that Mrs. Beresford and Rose were to come to Lyneton Abbots next day, to spend a short time before they returned to Grantford, which arrangement Rose entered into with animated delight. She should be so glad, she said, to escape even for a few days from dull stupid old Grantford, where they saw nobody from morning to night but invalids and elderly widows; and it would be such a pleasure to her to see a little more of dear Jeanie. She should have been so sorry to have gone back to Ireland without meeting her again; for though so many years had passed since they used to play together in the old garden at Lyneton Abbots, yet she had not forgotten those happy days, and nothing would please her so much as *having the opportunity* of talking them over quietly and leisurely. Though—and this remark was of Mrs. Beresford's making, and she made it with a meaning smile, seeing that the three persons most interested in it were amusing themselves quite out of hearing—she was afraid Rose would not have the opportunity of seeing very much more of her young friend in the old home.

For, as Miss Beresford said to her mamma as they returned from the ball that night, or rather early in the morning, young Mr. Allington was so very marked in his attentions. It was quite evident that if an understanding had not already taken place between them, it was close at hand. And judging from Sir William's manner, no opposition need be expected from that quarter; indeed, he seemed to have appropriated Jeanie already as his future niece, and paid her almost as much attention as the younger gentleman did. It would be an excellent match, Rose said, for they were acquainted with Sir William by report, and every one knew that Mr. Martin was his favorite nephew, and would most likely come in for the fine estate of Barton Firs, to say nothing of the living which was waiting for him there, filled up for the present by a temporary supply until such time as the young man should be ready to enter upon it. A very good match indeed, and little Miss Jeanie might consider herself fortunate above most high-born maidens whose purses were not quite in keeping with their social position.

And then Mrs. and Miss Beresford began to wonder, as, indeed, people very often did wonder, how it was that Miss Lyneton had never married. Certainly not for lack of admirers, for every one knew how often her hand had been sought by people who could have given her a much more splendid home than that crumbling old Manor House at Lyneton Abbots. So beautiful, too, with the pale, colorless, yellow-haired Lyneton beauty, which had been sung of in so many an old English ballad, and which had impressed Mrs. Beresford as being so very striking when she happened to meet Miss Gwendoline in passing through Oresbridge three or four years ago. And so very distinguished in her appearance. It was so seldom one saw those level brows, and that straight, perfect Grecian profile. It quite marked a person out from the usual class, even of beautiful women, though Rose could not say whether she would change her own dark, wavy hair, and rose and lily complexion, even for the marble loveliness of Miss Lyneton, of Lyneton Abbots. Some people admired brilliance of color even more than perfectness of form. And then Miss Lyneton was so very quiet, quiet beyond her years; for women at five-and-twenty were not expected to take all the sedateness of middle age upon them, nor quite withdraw themselves from those gallant little attentions which were always so willingly offered to beauty and distinction.

And then Rose, still in the white splendor of her ball-room costume, leaned her rounded arms

upon the dressing-table of Mrs. Mallinson's bedroom, and pondered upon her own bright and changeful features, rich with the bloom of youth, and quick with the smile of conscious beauty. And she thought that such a face as looked out upon her from the maple-framed mirror was better than Miss Lyneton's chiselled perfectness, or the fair, gentle simplicity of the little Jeanie. Certainly it was more fascinating, and always produced a more brilliant impression. Rose was content.

It was Martin Allington who folded Jeanie's cloak around her, and led her to the carriage. And when he asked permission to inquire after them next morning, it was Mr. Lyneton who smiled a courteous permission. They were always glad, he said, to see Mr. Allington at Lyneton Abbots.

And so the Oresbridge county ball passed over.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

But long after Jeanie, unconscious of any clouds which might be gathering over her happy future, slept quietly enough in her own room; long after gray dawn-light had crept up over the old house at Lyneton Abbots, waking the sparrows that nestled all night in the ivy-covered gables, and winning from them a faint little chirp of greeting to the yet unrisen sun, Miss Lyneton and her brother sat by the fireside in the oriel-room, thinking, not of the gay scene which they had just left, nor of the admiration which fair little Jeanie had won there; thinking only how they might save her from what they felt would be a life-long degradation, and their noble name from the first stain upon its hitherto unsullied brightness.

Gwendoline Lyneton loved her brother's only child very much. With almost a parent's care she had watched over her during those years in which she had grown from happy childhood into the beauty and grace of the Lyneton maidens. She would have mourned with a sadness which, had it been spent upon grief of her own, would have appeared vain and selfish, any thing which threatened to bring a cloud upon Jeanie's life. She had done her best to shield that life hitherto, and she meant so to shield it to the end. If her power could have equalled her will, this young girl, the last of the noble Lyneton race, should have been the happiest too. But dearer even than happiness she held the honor of the name which her niece bore. For that honor, if need be, she could have given up the life of her own life, even Maurice Demeron's love; for that honor she would have felt it her duty to crush the spring and freshness out of any man's life who dared to lay a touch upon it.

And Jeanie's happiness was not at stake now. So said Gwendoline Lyneton and her brother, as in the early dawn of the March morning they held close converse there in the old oriel-room. The child was young, and all her life lay before her; fair, and many would woo her. And if this Hugh Deeping, this obscurely-born clerk, who, having thoughts a little above his station, and a fine voice, and a frank, pleasant manner, had used these advantages to entangle his employer's daughter, had caused her so far to forget her dignity and the respect due to her position as to grant him stolen interviews, to loiter in the garden hand in hand with him, as she had been seen loitering only a few short hours ago, it could surely be but a passing fancy, which would fleet away as quickly as sunset glow from the old tower of St. Hilda's Church. There need be no anxiety, then, for Jeanie's happiness, no fear that any love of hers had fallen so far out of its place. Besides, had she not seemed happy and contented when Martin Allington was dancing with her? Had not her face been bright with smiles all through that brilliant night? And though, beside Rose Beresford, she might appear quiet and even thoughtful, it was but the overpowering glitter of the one that seemed to give shadow to the other; just as a pure, fair moonbeam stealing into some artificially-lighted room, shows cold and pale by the glare of its chandeliers. No, truly there need be no fear for Jeanie's happiness. It was in her own keeping yet, or if not in her own keeping after all Martin Allington's sweet looks and sweeter words, safe in the care of one who would treasure it as his own. For was not young Allington a brave and honorable man, of descent well-nigh as lofty as their own? And what was given to the nobly born, or promised by them, was kept with a pure faith, which these upstarts from the mob of mediocrity could never dream of. Jeanie's happiness would be as safe with Martin Allington as Gwendoline Lyneton's with that soldier-lover of hers in the far East.

But there must be no more Saturday evening readings of old heroic legends and love-ballads in this oriel-room, no more standing outside that door-way for tender speech between the high-born Lyneton maiden and an obscure clerk whose only heritage was his own over-brilliant ambition. Jeanie must go away from Lyneton Abbots for a little season, until this romantic fancy, even if it deserved the name of fancy, should have passed over. Although the young girl was safe enough, there was no need to place her in the way of temptation, no need to ruffle the quietness of her life by any idea of watching or *espionnage*, such as must be exercised so long as Hugh Deeping came to the house on that most urgent business of overlooking the plans and accounts.

Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, the spinster aunt who resided with them before the first Mrs. Lyneton's time, and whose jealousy for the honor of the family was as watchful as even her niece's or Mr. Lyneton's, should be told of the state of things, and advised to send for Jeanie to visit her in London. This could easily be accomplished, for Aunt Hildegarde had often

wished her grandniece to spend a few months with her at the old family house in Eaton Square, and especially now, when the young girl was of an age to make it important that she should mix in other society than was within reach in the quiet village of Lyneton Abbots, where even the best class of people were so far beneath their own rank of life. Indeed, Mr. Lyneton had already given his consent for Jeanie to go to her aunt in May, and this would but hasten the visit a very few weeks.

Then to fill up her place, for Mr. Lyneton, though anxious enough to remove his young daughter from the reach of harm, would miss her sweet voice and pleasant ways about the house, Rose Beresford might be invited to extend her proposed visit from a few days to a month. True, Rose was no companion for Mr. Lyneton or his sister, having been accustomed to such a completely different life from theirs, but still she was a bright, merry, warm-hearted girl, accomplished and conversable, very brilliant in society, and possessing an admirable tact for adapting herself to different people. She would keep them from being dull at Lyneton Abbots until this little disagreeableness had worn itself away, and Jeanie could be sent for again with perfect safety.

That London visit would be a pleasant arrangement, at any rate, for young Martin Allington, for he had but a few days before asked and received Mr. Lyneton's consent to woo his daughter. And though he had won no promise from Jeanie yet, and though he could not tell by word or look of hers that the love he gave was cared for, yet Martin knew that he was rich, and handsome, and fascinating, and since most girls were caught by these things, it would be strange if Jeanie were quite insensible to them. He was going up to London, too, very shortly with his uncle, Sir William Allington, of Barton Firs, and Sir William and Miss Hildegarde Lyneton were old friends, and often exchanged visits when the Baronet happened to be staying in town. So that Martin had a clear course before him. Things could not have fallen out better for his suit.

Perhaps Mr. Lyneton thought of this too when he proposed to his sister Gwendoline that Aunt Hildegarde should be written to. For in his quiet, reserved way he loved Jeanie very much, and he would fain see her comfortably settled in life before his turn came to leave it. The Lynetons were not a long-lived race. Those old monuments in St. Hilda's Church told that plainly enough to any one who had patience to read the dates upon them. He might not have many years to live, then, and though to part with his only child, even to a brave, good-hearted young fellow like Martin Allington, would cost him more than he cared to tell, yet it was better so than that he should die and leave her alone in the old home. Alone, for he could not tell that his sister Gwendoline would be always minded to stay there, and be a *mother to his child.*

And then they talked of how the brilliant sights of London, its never-ending succession of gayeties, amusements, new faces, new friendships, new associations, would help to chase away from Jeanie's mind any lingering thought of what she had left behind. For Gwendoline remembered how all these things had dazzled and enchanted her when she went to stay for a month or two with Aunt Hildegarde one summer-time, just before Maurice Demeron came down to Lyneton Abbots for the shooting.

Then Gwendoline's thoughts strayed away to sweet September days, so far off now, when under the leaves of the Lyneton Abbots woods she had first learned how bright and happy a thing life may be. Strayed forward, too, to other September days, not so far off, when the long waiting should be over, and the glory and the beauty of the old time should come back again. For it was such a little while, only until these leaves, that were just unfolding now, should have browned, and faded, and fallen. Six months! And for one who has waited patiently six years, that does not seem long.

Yes, Jeanie would soon forget. Even if she had any thing to hold to, hers was not a nature to hold resolutely to it. She was just at that age when outward circumstances exert a very strong influence; when no sorrow sinks forever into the soul. She might feel sad for a day or two, until she got accustomed to the new sights and sounds of the great city. She had never been so far from home before—indeed, never been from home at all, and of course London would seem very strange to her at first. But then the new life would soon more than fill up any blank which the removal of the old one might cause. She would be very happy with Aunt Hildegarde. She would learn to love Martin Allington—handsome, genial, kind-hearted Martin Allington. She would come home again after a few weeks, with no remembrance of that former fancy, no thought of Hugh Deeping, save that he had a pleasant voice and had helped to pass away some otherwise dreary evenings in the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

So Graham Lyneton and his sister said to each other as they sat by the fireside in the oriel-room, just under that dormer-window whose shadow was even then lying upon the chancel end of St. Hilda's Church—the church where so many Lyneton people were sleeping quietly enough beneath their carved stone canopies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mr. Lyneton wrote that same morning to Aunt Hildegarde, telling her how matters stood at Lyneton Abbots, and suggesting that Jeanie's proposed visit should take place at once. To which letter there came by return of post a reply, stating that Miss Hildegarde Lyneton would come down herself next day, and after remaining at the Manor House one night, take her

niece up to town with her. Aunt Hildegarde was a person of great decision of character, and where the honor of the family was at stake, could act with a promptitude and dispatch which even a prime minister need not have been ashamed of.

She was very kind, too, in her way, and promised that nothing should be wanting in amusement or society to render Jeanie's visit both pleasant and successful. This last word was underlined, intimating, though no other reference was made to the subject, how fully Aunt Hildegarde comprehended the nature of the trust which had been commited to her, and how conscientiously she would fulfill it.

The day after the ball, Mrs. Beresford and her daughter Rose left their apartments at No. 19 Grosmont Road, and, instead of returning to the stupid little county town of Grantford, where they had been spending the winter, came to Lyneton Abbots for a short visit, carrying with them Mrs. Mallinson's good wishes and blessings. For, as she said, they were the best lodgers she had ever had, so very liberal in their payments, and so perfectly satisfied with every thing that was done for them, and not at all above a little pleasant chat with herself when she went up stairs to wait upon them. Indeed, much more free and friendly in that respect than Mr. Deeping himself, who never manifested the least desire for any thing like friendly conversation if she happened to go into the room to see that the gas was not turned up too high, or that the furniture was properly dusted. And Mrs. Mallinson hoped that if ever they came to any of the Oresbridge balls again, they would patronize her apartments, for she should always do her utmost to please them; and, besides, having been accustomed ever since her husband took the business in Grosmont Road to ball company, she knew what that sort of people wanted, more perhaps than parties who were not accustomed to any thing of the kind. Certainly more than Mrs. Green, poor thing! who felt herself so wonderfully set up if she got a stray gentleman from one of the hotels at the time of the county ball. Poor Mrs. Green knew nothing at all about attending to people of that sort, and having their coffee ready for them when they came home, and speaking genteelly to them, as the quality always expected to be spoken to, Mrs. Mallinson said.

Rose Beresford was a very beautiful girl, though that was never the word which any one used in describing her. There was a sort of luring grace about her, a playful witchery, half saucy, half shy, which no one could explain, only feel it and be conquered by it. She had the rare beauty so seldom seen but in Irish women, of rose and lily bloom of complexion, heightened by jet-black hair and long dark eyelashes, which made the blue eyes beneath them seem almost black too, so deep was the shadow in which they shone and sparkled. A great contrast to Miss Lyneton's still, statuesque beauty, which rarely lighted up into animation, which was like the sculptured perfection of the Greek faces one sees in art galleries, pale, passionless, but holding such terrible power of earnestness fast bound under all their calm. Rose's face was never the same two minutes together. It changed like an April day, except that no black clouds ever passed over it, only shadow enough to make the brightness seem brighter when it came back again. And in all her ways there was a piquant playfulness, full blossom of that girlish fun which made little Rose Beresford one of the maddest, merriest, most mischievous of children, the terror of poor old gardener Grey, who declared that she almost plagued the life out of him with her wild freaks.

No danger of Lyneton Abbots going to sleep while Rose stayed there. Rather, Gwendoline might fear lest she should bring too much life into the quiet Manor House, where six years ago gardener Grey's little torment used to play such merry pranks. For she was running over with life and brightness still. She would tell funny stories by the hour together, and mimic the peculiarities of people she had met, with a raciness which made even the grave Mr. Lyneton smile. And as for her tales of Irish wit and humor, even Rollo himself might have been supposed to understand them, with such mute wonderment did he look up into her face when, with ringing, musical laugh, she went through one after another of them. Surely Miss Gwendoline Lyneton might have searched far and wide for another visitor so bright and gamesome and mirth-provoking as this Rose Beresford.

Gwendoline never spoke to her niece of what she had seen as she came down stairs on the night of the county ball. Nor, when Hugh Deeping's name was mentioned by Mr. Lyneton in Jeanie's presence, did she by any added coldness of look or manner betray the scorn into which her previous kindly indifference toward him had passed. That could have done no good. It could only have made a painful consciousness between them, and brought a shade of bitterness into the unbroken friendship which they had hitherto felt for each other. That scene could not be recalled. Both Mr. Lyneton and his sister had determined that it should not be repeated, and therefore it might safely be let alone. Gwendoline had too much confidence in her niece's honor to think for one moment that even if Jeanie wished it she would hold any intercourse with Hugh Deeping unknown to her father. She was warm-hearted, generous, perhaps a little impulsive, but she was a Lyneton still, and, as a Lyneton, her aunt could trust her never to stoop, by mean, dishonorable deeds, from the lofty pureness in which they had always lived.

Gwendoline was right in that same confidence. She need not fear.

Neither was any thing said to Jeanie about the new arrangement which had been made with Miss Hildegarde Lyneton about that visit to London. She knew that she was to go some time during the summer, and stay for some

weeks with Aunt Hildegarde, for that had been already talked of, even before Hugh Deeping ever began to come to Lyneton Abbots. The mere altering of the date was a matter calling for little remark. Aunt Hildegarde often changed her plans. It might be more convenient to receive her niece now than later in the season—that was all Jeanie need know. All, indeed, that she ought to know. For to acquaint her with the reason of her sudden departure would be to frustrate its intention. If she did care for Hugh Deeping,—though that was simply an impossibility,—to lecture her about it, and then send her away, would only make her care for him more, by magnifying the affair into needless importance. On the other hand, if she did not care for him, and he was only endeavoring by these underhand means to win her regard, then the very acknowledgment of the danger would make it more dangerous.

And so, when the letter arrived from Aunt Hildegarde, announcing her intention of coming down to Lyneton Abbots that same evening, and taking Jeanie back with her to town on the following day, no explanation was made beyond the one which she had herself given, namely, that it would be more convenient to have her young niece now than later in the summer, as she had some thought of joining a party of friends on the Continent after May.

If Mr. Lyneton and his sister watched Jeanie closely before that letter of Aunt Hildegarde's came, they watched her still more closely afterward, to note, if possible, any expression of disappointment or regret, any passing shade of sadness, from which they might gather that she was grieved to go away so soon. True, such sadness could never have altered their firm resolve, never have made either of them swerve from what they considered to be their duty. Still, it would have made their own hearts sad to think that they were saddening hers, and so it was with a feeling of infinite relief that they marked how cheerfully, and even brightly, she heard of this sudden change in her hitherto quiet life.

Except for that little *tableau vivant* which would not let itself be forgotten, Gwendoline Lyneton could almost have thought that all her fears were groundless, all her watchful foresight without the slightest need. For when Mr. Lyneton brought Aunt Hildegarde's letter into the room where Jeanie and Rose Beresford were singing together, and said—"Jeanie, your aunt is coming here this evening, and wishes to take you back with her to-morrow. Can you be ready to go?"—Jeanie had said, just as quietly as if the proposed expedition had been a morning walk, and not two months' sojourn in the great world of London—

"Yes, papa; I suppose I can. Aunt Hildegarde is very kind. Only I shall be sorry to leave Rose so soon."

And then she had taken her part in the music again, with a voice clear and steady as ever. *Nay, only a few minutes* afterward Gwendoline was sure she heard her niece's light laugh mingling with that of Rose Beresford. Doubtless that light-hearted maiden was telling some more of her funny stories, or perhaps singing one of those humorous songs which no one could listen to without almost tears of merriment, they were so brimming over with rich nonsense. And Gwendoline was never so thankful for the sound of Jeanie's laugh as when she heard it on the morning of the day that Aunt Hildegarde's letter came.

CHAPTER XXX.

But when Rose had finished singing that nonsensical song, and when she had settled down to what was indeed a very unusual thing with her, half an hour's spell of reading, Jeanie stole away up stairs to her own room, and thought about that visit to London.

To-morrow, Friday, at noon! Then she should just miss the pleasant evening reading, and she should not see Hugh Deeping to say good-bye to him before she went. He would never even know that she was sorry to go away, for she could not leave any message for him. He would think, perhaps, that she was glad to go—that she would rather be joining in all the gayety of London life, rushing about under Aunt Hildegarde's chaperonage from ball to concert, and from concert to opera, night after night, than be living quietly on in that old Manor House of Lyneton Abbots, looking forward to the one bright spot in all the week, the evening when he generally came in and read to them. As if any thing in London could be so pleasant as that! As if all the concerts and operas in the world could be worth one reading of the "Nut-browne Mayde," or even a single page of those dear old ballads that never seemed so full of music as when Hugh read them! Oh! if Aunt Hildegarde would only stay over Saturday, and let her say good-bye to Mr. Deeping—let her tell him that she did not mean to forget him through all that busy two months in London!

And yet what difference could that make, so long as they trusted each other? If, instead of Mr. Deeping coming as usual on Saturday afternoon, he had sent a message to say that he was going away for two months, would she have been very much grieved? Would she have trusted him any the less? Would his going away anywhere, for ever so long, make him not belong to her now? No, she was not afraid. There was no need to be afraid. Nothing, she was quite sure, except her own falseness or Hugh's, could part them from each other now. And that, she well knew, would never part them. She could trust Hugh Deeping as steadfastly as any of those beautiful ladies in the old ballads had trusted the knights who fought so bravely for them; as steadfastly as the "Nut-browne Mayde" trusted her lover, even when he seemed to change so sadly toward her.

Only it would have been so much pleasanter to have told him this, to have had just one little five minutes, as she might perhaps have had before he went away, or even to have looked him in the face, and told him in that look that she meant to remember him all through the long weeks of their parting. If Aunt Hildegarde could but have stayed a little longer, until it was Hugh's time to come to Lyneton Abbots and help her papa with the accounts.

And then Miss Lyneton's voice was heard, calling her niece to get ready to drive into Oresbridge for a shopping expedition.

The expedition lasted some time, for Rose Beresford, who went with them too, wanted a song which had to be hunted out from the very bottom of a great pile of music in the piano-forte warehouse, and there were commissions from Mrs. Beresford, who was going back to Grantford next day, and there were books to be ordered for Mr. Lyneton, and errands to the dressmaker and milliner on behalf of Jeanie herself, whose modest wardrobe was scarcely equal to the requirements of a two months' residence in town. So that it was quite late in the afternoon before they were on their way home again.

Hugh Deeping, coming from his duties at the Bellona iron works, met the carriage just as it was turning into the Lyneton Abbots road.

There was a wistful look in Jeanie's eyes, and her face flushed a little as Hugh raised his hat to the ladies, and then passed on. She thought perhaps her aunt would have stopped the carriage and let her say good-bye to Mr. Deeping, as she was going away for such a long time, and she turned to ask if they might not stay one moment.

But something in Gwendoline Lyneton's look stopped her. The slight, even brows were bent, the gray eyes had a cold gleam of displeasure in them, and the full lips were bent into a haughty, disdainful curve, which told plainly enough that Miss Lyneton was not in a mood to be interrupted just then. Jeanie turned away, grieved and wondering. It was seldom indeed such a look as that vexed the calm stillness of her aunt's face.

By and by Gwendoline said—and though the words were simple enough, there was a touch of harshness in her voice as she said them—

"I wish we had not stayed out so late, Jeanie. You have had a little cold since the ball night, when I saw you standing in the garden with only that thin cloak on."

That was enough. Jeanie understood the whole truth now. Her aunt's voice and face had told more than she meant they should. That look, then, was for Hugh Deeping, and Jeanie knew why she was going away so suddenly to London, instead of waiting, as she had expected to wait, until May. But she said nothing. It was her way, too, to be quiet. Only it seemed as if suddenly a new door had been opened in her life, and through it she could look out into joys and sufferings which had had *no name for her* before. That beautiful little seed-thought of love, which long ago had fallen so far down and so quietly into her heart, must bear other than the sweet flower of hope fulfilled. She, too, must learn to wait and be patient, as others had learned before her.

Rose Beresford, intent upon reading the words of her new song, did not see what was going on. But she did just catch a glimpse of Mr. Deeping as he passed them, and recognized him for the same young man who had gone out of Mrs. Mallinson's shop the afternoon of the ball. For there was something rather unconventional about Hugh Deeping's appearance. He dressed in a fashion peculiar to himself, not always following the prevailing mode so closely as he might have done, nor, as we have already seen, being quite so particular in the little niceties of Parisian collars and Persigny ties. Also, Rose remembered that he carried himself rather awkwardly, and had a way of setting his feet down which in rainy or dusty weather must be very detrimental to the tidy appearance of his boots. So that she easily recognized him again, even though she only just saw him for a moment in passing. Perhaps some day, when the mood was upon her, she would amuse herself by mimicking his step and gait, for she had a truly wonderful faculty of imitation, and could throw even the gravest people into fits of merriment by her reproduction of any little oddities which she happened to have witnessed.

After that they had a very quiet drive. Rose was busy with her music, and neither Miss Lyneton nor her niece appeared inclined to keep up any conversation. When they reached the griffin-guarded gate-way of Lyneton Abbots, Jeanie went up into her own room to superintend the packing of her wardrobe, and when that was done she leaned her arms upon the broad low window-seat, and looked out through the thickening gloom to the black yew-trees in the church-yard. The old church-yard, in which many a snow-drop had begun to spring for joy at the March sunshine, snow-drops and primroses too, with here and there a violet straying up among the grave-stones.

She will not sigh or murmur as she sits there, though the smile is not quite so bright upon her face as it was last week at this time. And there is no sound of complaining in her voice, as, after awhile, she begins to repeat to herself, in quiet under-tones, a stanza of the sweet old rhyme which often goes singing through her thoughts now:

"And though that I of ancestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have you proved how I you loved
A squyer of low degrè.
And ever shall, whatso befall,
To-day therefore anone:
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone."

Perhaps there is a little of the Lyneton steadfastness even about Jeanie. Perhaps time will show that she too can wait and suffer and be patient, as others of her race have done before her. Perhaps, as the granite of Gwendoline's

pride keeps heaving up, hard and immovable, through all the velvet turf of her courtesy, so the strong soul of the buried Lynetons, maidens, wives and mothers, who loved so truly and trusted so faithfully, may live still, dauntless as ever, in this young Jeanie, who is to go away to London to-morrow, without once saying good-bye to Hugh Deeping, or telling him that she is sorry to leave him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Aunt Hildegarde came. Truly a stately woman, a gentlewoman of the old school, who looked as if she might have belonged to Lyneton Abbots when the place was in its prime, when those old oriel-rooms had rustled with the sweep of brocaded dresses, and echoed to the tread of cavaliers in love-locks and slashed doublets. For she was so very tall and dignified, and that black satin gown of hers trailed so grandly, and her gray hair was raised in curl after curl upon her high forehead, making her seem even more imposing of stature. And in all her ways there was the measured courtly grace of the ancient gentlewoman, slow, sedate of speech, grave of mien, dignified exceedingly.

Yet lurking behind her dignity there was a certain kindliness which promised fairly for Jeanie's happiness during that two months' visit to London. Aunt Hildegarde was never severe to any one who would obey her and be ruled by her, and give in to her supreme will in every thing, as Jeanie seemed likely enough to do, being of a gentle, yielding disposition. She was only stern when her authority was questioned, or the honor of the Lyneton family set at nought. If Jeanie was submissive, if she could just put Hugh Deeping on one side and resolve to think no more about him, she might make a very pleasant thing of that two months in London.

For as soon as Sir William Allington heard that Jeanie was going back to town with her aunt, he invited his old friend Miss Hildegarde Lyneton to bring her over to Barton Firs for a few days.

Barton Firs was a fine country-seat a few miles from London, surrounded by splendid woods, which would soon be putting on all their spring beauty. And the private grounds were very pleasant too. There was an archery ground, and a lake for boating, and a winding stream with hazel-fringed banks, where Jeanie and young Martin Allington might fish for hours together, if so disposed, nor feel the time pass heavily. And within-doors, to while away the long spring evenings, there was a library more than equal to Lyneton Abbots, with such store of books, ancient and modern ballads, legends, romances, fairy tales, that, having Martin Allington by her side, Jeanie need miss neither poem nor reader.

Miss Hildegarde Lyneton hoped great things *from that visit to Barton Firs.* It was the most fortunate arrangement, she said, that could have been made under the circumstances; for it would keep Jeanie's mind employed without being quite such a tax upon her strength as the gayety of London life, nor such a violent contrast either to the extremely quiet life she had been accustomed to lead at Lyneton Abbots. Nothing could have been more pleasantly contrived, and she meant to accept Sir William's kind invitation, and take Jeanie out to the Firs as soon as ever she had recovered the fatigue of her journey.

So Jeanie went away with Aunt Hildegarde, to be put through a series of amusements and mild dissipations, which should effectually drive from her youthful mind any lingering fancy for this too aspiring young clerk, this Mr. Deeping of the Bellona iron works, who had thought to link with his ignoble fortunes the noble name and high degree of the old Lyneton Abbots house.

A most unheard-of piece of assumption, Aunt Hildegarde said, as she talked it over with her nephew and Gwendoline the night before she went away. But the world had changed vastly since her young days, and if those who represented the grand knights and barons of centuries gone by did not look well to the sustaining of their honor, all the ancient landmarks of descent would be washed away by this continually rising tide of commonalty, before which many a noble house had already fallen and perished. Mr. Lyneton had done well, very well, to lay his strong hand at once upon the evil and check it in its very outset. If others had done the same, instead of yielding to infirmity of purpose or pressure of circumstances, some names that she could mention would have a fairer escutcheon than they boasted now.

It was a cold frosty morning, toward the middle of March, when Aunt Hildegarde took her niece away. No sunshine to light up the dreary, neglected old garden, or to lie with golden touch on the crumbling, many-gabled mansion of Lyneton Abbots. And though it was noon-time, the gray mists poured down from the hills, and the wind moaned dismally through the churchyard yew-trees, as if with a sound of farewell. Gwendoline Lyneton might keep back the tears from her eyes, but she felt them at her heart, as she said good-bye to Jeanie there at the old stone gate-way, the moss-bearded griffins looking down upon them meanwhile with grave, doubtful faces, as if they too knew, but would not tell, now much might come to pass before this farewell were changed for Jeanie's welcome home again.

But it was all for the best. As Gwendoline Lyneton and her brother stood there under the old gate-way, bearing in their memories Jeanie's quiet, peaceful look as she waved a farewell to them and the old home, they felt as if the bitterest pain of parting must be to themselves, who were left behind, not to her who was going forth to new joys, treading they thought on the threshold of a happier, brighter life than she could ever have known in that secluded village. It would

all come right. It was all for the best. Besides, Jeanie had seemed so content to go. Earnestly as Gwendoline looked into her face, she read there no other regret than any loving heart might feel in parting even for a little while from the home where all its love is gathered up, to which all its memories belong. And with this thought they were fain to cheer themselves as they turned and went back to the old house, which seemed so empty now that Jeanie was away.

Mrs. Beresford set off to Grantford the same day, leaving Rose to keep Gwendoline and her brother company for a few weeks longer.

Rose was quite glad to stay. She loved change, even if it was from the dullness of a second-rate country town to the scarcely less monotonous current of life in an old-fashioned country house, where a chance visitor seldom came to bring any tidings of how the world went on outside. She felt as if she had used up all the life in those quiet rooms at Grantford, where Mrs. Beresford, not being possessed of large means, had been obliged to deny herself and her daughter many even of the sober gayeties which of right belonged to people in their rank of life. They were unable to keep much company, or to go out often into society, or indeed to launch into any expenses which might trench upon the limited income of an officer's widow. Here, at any rate, there would be new faces to look at, and new characters to study, and the oddities of the village people to laugh at or imitate, and perhaps a ball or a concert at Oresbridge now and then by way of a change, or an exceedingly quiet dinner-party among some of the county families of the neighborhood. Enough at any rate to keep her from utter stagnation until May, when she was to spend a month in London, and then possibly take a turn at the sea-side, or run over for a few weeks to her friends in Dublin, where there was always plenty of change and gayety.

Between Gwendoline Lyneton and Rose Beresford there could never be any thing but the merest surface friendship. One, intense of nature, quiet, self-contained; the other, exquisitely graceful in her shallowness, they could only touch each other in the pleasant courtesies of social life. Rose was a very bright companion, with a ready quickness of perception which could at once adapt itself to varying moods and tempers. She had the tact sometimes not given to much finer, more generous natures than her own, of knowing when to speak and when to be silent. And for this Gwendoline was glad to have her stay at the Manor House. She was a pleasant companion for Mr. Lyneton. She would in some sort fill up the void caused by Jeanie's absence. Gwendoline knew well enough that she herself could never stand in Jeanie's place to her brother. Reserved, controlled by nature as well as habit, she could not unbend freely and reveal all her wealth of affection as Jeanie, younger and less tried, could do. And then a sister's love, *faithful* and tender though *he had proved it to be, was* not like a daughter's. Perhaps in bitter need and trial Gwendoline Lyneton could have done more for her brother than that fair young daughter of his; in the ordinary needs of home life not so much.

This was not her fault. Since Maurice Demeron went abroad, six years ago, her life had been one long hiding away of the love which might not tell itself out in word or deed, which could only trust and be patient. Few could live a life like that, and be always ready for the pleasant affectionateness of home intercourse. Faith, that had to believe so much, and trust, which strove to hold fast through so many long years of waiting, must needs write their story sometimes on a face whose habitual expression was one of grave, quiet patience. That told the secret of many a lonely hour spent by Gwendoline Lyneton in the old house by the churchyard; when, too proud to tell to others the thoughts which yet she could not wholly bid away, she thought them out in a solitude where none could be saddened by any tears they brought. She could be enough for herself always. Enough for the needs of others she could not always be.

And that was why she wished Rose Beresford to stay. Not that the young girl's graceful, shallow nature could yield any satisfying companionship to her own, so strong in its quietness, so quiet in its strength, but that Rose's playful ways, and Rose's sweet voice, and Rose's merry raillery, always sparkling, but never wounding, might serve to gladden her brother's solitude when Jeanie was far away.

Jeanie, who was even now speeding along with Aunt Hildegarde to the great city of London. No hand to fold Gwendoline's in its tender clasp to-night, no lips to touch her own in that good-night kiss, which was now for the first time missed between them. Yet it was their own doing that the young girl had gone away—their own doing that for four long weeks—perhaps longer than that—she must listen to Rose Beresford's sparkle of merriment and nonsense, and bend her own rich mind to the level of that pretty frivolity which, though it might amuse for an hour or two, or serve to pass away a lonely evening now and then, or cheer up Mr. Lyneton when he came in weary and anxious with his many business cares, would soon grow burdensome when it had to be borne with day after day and week after week.

Already the old Lyneton pride had begun to exact its stint of self-denial. Gwendoline Lyneton might have to pay a bitterer price for it still before all its work was done.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THAT long day, the first day of Jeanie's absence, wore away, and the shadows of night gathered round about, and the stars peeped down one by one through the elm-trees in Lyneton Abbots garden, those old elm-trees on

whose slender twigs the little leaflets were just swelling up, only waiting for April sunshine to smooth out all their folded treasures, and kiss them into green beauty. And far off upon the eastern sky could be seen the red glow of many a flaming tongue, shot up by the furnaces of the Bellona iron works, where Hugh Deeping had been toiling hard all day.

But not toiling with the spring and energy which had kept him up for so many weeks past. He was sad at heart that day, for the strange coldness of the look which Miss Lyneton had had cast upon him from those quiet gray eyes of hers the day before. For there was no mistaking that look, the sudden chill of pride and scorn which had seemed to freeze all the gentleness out of her face when she caught sight of Hugh returning Jeanie's wistful greeting.

Somebody or something had ruffled Miss Lyneton's usual calmness; and, once ruffled, Hugh Deeping felt she would not easily forget or forgive. That look had stung him very much, though he could not guess its meaning, nor why it had been cast upon him. It was a look no brave and honorable man could meekly bear without demanding the wherefore of its cold rebuke. Nay, even worse than rebuke, for rebuke would imply some charge, which might be met and repelled, at any rate explained; but this told simply of a lofty indifference, which neither asked nor cared for explanation or reconciliation.

What had he done that any one should dare to look upon him with a glance which held so much of scorn as that? Was he not noble, upright, and honorable, though no very courtly ancestors had given him their name and degree, though he had to toil patiently enough day by day with his own right hand and tired brain, to win the living which others inherited with no care or pain of theirs? Did that give them any right, though, to look down upon him? Did that make him less worthy to seek and hold their favor? Besides, had he done any thing that he was afraid for Miss Lyneton or her brother to know? Were not his hands white from all stain of bribe or falseness; whiter in that way, perhaps, than many which would have scorned to clasp them? Had he wronged these people in any way, or defrauded them in aught of their due? Indeed, had he not rather given much more than their due, laboring many an hour not for reward but love? Had he not given them the best he could give of time, and energy, and thought? Why, then, must he meet a look like that, a look before which a base man might well cringe, but which no honest man need tamely brook?

These thoughts stirred Hugh's heart as he plodded patiently on in that little counting-house at the Bellona iron works, amid the din of the hammers and the clanking of feet upon metal-plated floors. And they vexed him bitterly enough, for the hasty spirit within him was not yet taught to endure quietly, and wait *patiently. Hugh had much to learn, and he might have to learn it in quite new and unlooked-for ways, before he was at all fit for that high standing-place toward which he labored now; before he could teach others the true wisdom, and tell them, out of his own sad yet lofty life, how to rule their own.*

So that was a weary day for him. And wearily enough, too, it passed for Miss Lyneton, there in the crumbling old Manor House of Lyneton Abbots, so quiet now that Jeanie's voice was no longer heard in it. There was many a lingering thought that day for Jeanie, many an unspoken wish for her coming home again. Only for Rose's sake Gwendoline was obliged to appear cheerful, and hide away any private regret under, at least, the outward garb of pleasant social intercourse. It was no new thing for Gwendoline to do that. So much of her life had to be lived alone that she had learned to be silent over it, and not vex others with any sadness it might bring.

Rose was trying the new song which she had brought from Oresbridge the day before. There was a syren-like sweetness about Rose Beresford's voice whe she sang; such rich, luring music. It seemed to tell out so much love and longing, so much glow and passion which a nature like hers, bright, shallow, unreflective, could never have felt for itself. Like many who charm the public by sweet melody, or stirring oratory, she awakened thoughts in others which had never touched her own heart, and gave them the key to a life whose beauty and richness her own could never reach. She would sing the simplest little song with a tenderness and pathos which brought tears to the listener's eye; and then, almost before the last tones had died out, she would chase those tears away by some light strain, or turn them into laughter by the wildest, merriest, sauciest comic song, full of archness and humor; to be in its turn replaced by some wail of passionate lament, whose sweet words called up in all hearts but hers who uttered them, feelings there is no name for.

Miss Lyneton wondered sometimes, how, thinking so little, Rose Beresford could express so much; how a soul whose capacities were of the feeblest, could give speech to passion which never stirred it; while those whose lives were lived with real, true earnestness and passion which was more than seeming, could find no words to tell it, could only brood over it in dumb impatience.

Suddenly Rose stopped and wheeled round upon the music-stool, until she faced Miss Lyneton, who was sitting at the table by the lamp, busy with her usual evening work of etching designs from the old illuminated missals. It was work which progressed slowly to-night, though, for Gwendoline was too sad to be very industrious.

"Miss Lyneton, was not that gentleman we met yesterday Mr. Deeping? I mean, the gentleman who was coming toward the town just as we were turning into the Lyneton Abbots road. I just happened to look up as he was passing the carriage, and I thought I knew

the step again. An awkward step, too. Mr. Deeping certainly did not pay diligent heed to the instructions of the dancing-master in his younger days."

Gwendoline drew herself up slightly, and her lips were pressed together somewhat tighter than was their wont. But that might be because she had not sketched to her own satisfaction the head of the old monk who was bending over his rosary.

"Yes, we did meet Mr. Deeping as we were leaving Oresbridge. I did not think you knew him."

"Oh! I don't possess the honor of his acquaintance," replied Rose, just shaking her head saucily enough to make all the dark curls quiver into brilliance as they caught the lamp-light on their glossy rings. "I was never considered to be a person of very lofty aspirations, or much given to reaching beyond my own station, but still I should not exactly care to choose my friends from among the clerks of the Bellona iron works, which very distinguished position I understand Mr. Deeping has the honor to sustain at the present time. But, you know, we had our rooms for the county ball this week at a Mrs. Mallinson's on the Grosmont Road, whose husband keeps an Italian warehouse, as she calls it, but a meal and bacon shop, as I should call it, which we never found out until the fly drove up to the place, to our great disgust. Because, who could ever think that No. 19 Grosmont Road, which might be a residence fit for a duchess, would turn out a repository for meal and bacon? Of course we stayed, because it was too late to make a change; and really we were very comfortable—so much so, that I should not object to go there another time. And it seems this young Mr. Deeping lodges there; so, you see, we could not help hearing a little about him, more especially as Mrs. Mallinson has a remarkable gift in conversation, and such a taste in cultivating it, too!"

Still that same compressed mouth, still that haughty raising of the head, as Miss Lyneton worked on at the old monk and his rosary. Rose thought it was Miss Lyneton's way to be very quiet. Perhaps she was feeling rather gloomy to-night, on account of Jeanie's departure; and so the young lady rattled on more vivaciously than ever, for it was a peculiarity of Rose Beresford's constitution that when other people were silent or moody she became more animated.

"Yes. Mrs. Mallinson really is a remarkable woman. I only wish you could have had the honor of her acquaintance, Miss Lyneton—a regular peripatetic philosopher, for she does her talking as she walks round and dusts the things with her pocket-handkerchief. And such a peculiar habit of sniffing, or snuffing—I don't just know what is the proper word to use. It is clearly impossible to forget that sniff when you have once heard it, or witnessed the effects which it produces. Such a volume of sound, accompanied by the most original contortions and grimaces, put in by way of a finish, when she has come to the end of one of her long periods."

And Rose imitated Mrs. Mallinson's distinctive peculiarity with such laughable accuracy that even Mr. Lyneton himself was compelled to relax into a smile, and Gwendoline found it difficult, gloomy as were her thoughts, to keep a grave face. Certainly, when all other means of getting a livelihood failed, Miss Beresford might realize a competency by the exercise of that imitative faculty of hers, it was so truly marvellous.

"But a good-hearted woman, too, in her way, if only she was not so fond of talking. You never know when she means to give over if once she begins. She seems to know every thing about every body, and as she is most liberal in distributing her knowledge, you can imagine to what a length she is led out sometimes. Quite a manual of useful information, I should say, for any one who wished to write a history of the manners and customs of Oresbridge; for nobody does any thing there, I should imagine, without letting her know about it. And she has a most motherly interest in Mr. Deeping, or rather, I should say, a mother-in-lawly interest, as my own power of observation enabled me to detect."

Under any other circumstances Miss Lyneton would have disdained to betray the slightest interest in a mere string of remarks bearing upon the personal affairs of strangers; people, too, of a station so far beneath her own. Now, however, there was a certain proud satisfaction in hearing of Mr. Deeping's commonplace surroundings, since it served still further to justify the decided step which had been taken in removing Jeanie from any further association with him. And there was the real Lyneton hauteur in her voice as she replied—

"And so I suppose this Mrs. Mallinson treated you to an epitome of Mr. Deeping's family matters and arrangements, since she seems so well qualified to give information of that nature?"

"Exactly, that was the very thing she did. I do believe she told me every thing about him, past, present, and to come. But she was drawn out, you know, to enter into particulars, because the young man was considerate enough to give up his sitting-room for our accommodation, and join Mrs. Mallinson and her daughter in the back parlor, a truly elegant apartment, where the leisure time of the family appears to be spent. Though I don't imagine, after all, that the change involved any very great self-denial on Mr. Deeping's part; for among other little interesting items of information, Mrs. Mallinson gave us to understand that he cherished a preference for her daughter, the fair-faced Matilda, sole heiress of the meal and bacon repository. And for her part she would not take it at all amiss if the young people did make matters up between them, for iron was a wonderful good thing to settle upon; there was nothing

like iron for getting a young man on in the world. It came a long way before the ministry, which she might make free to tell us Sarah Matilda had once some thoughts of taking an interest in."

And Rose, who dearly loved a little fun at the expense of other people's peculiarities, put on Mrs. Mallinson's brisk nasal twang, and tossed her glossy curls after the manner of the scarlet fuchsias in Mrs. Mallinson's best cap, and finished off with that good lady's resonant sniff of approbation, lateral twists and upheavals included—a most mirth-provoking exhibition. But indeed it was a long time since she had met with such an original as Mrs. Mallinson, such an admirable subject for imitation and playful, harmless raillery.

"So you see, poor young man," she continued, "we did not put him to any very serious discomfort when we turned him out of his sitting-room for a few hours. Nay, I believe, if the truth could be known, he sincerely thanked us in his heart of hearts for throwing him more completely into the fascinating companionship of the fair Sarah Matilda. Because when I happened to see him a second time, and was so impressed with his personal appearance, at least the reverse aspect of it, as to recognize him yesterday, he was standing behind his lady-love at the piano in the back parlor, a forty-guinea piano, Miss Lyneton, as Mrs. Mallinson informed us, bought as soon as ever Sarah Matilda left school, that her practice mightn't run off; because, you see, practice is a thing that runs off so soon; there's nothing that runs off so soon as practice, particularly the high notes, which she takes beautiful, does Sarah Matilda, if only she wasn't so nervous. And she was looking up into Mr. Deeping's face so sweetly—oh! so very sweetly. Really I could never hope by any poor words of mine to make you understand how very sweetly she was looking up into his face. It was quite overpowering! I don't wonder that the poor young man surrendered at discretion before the magic of a glance like that. You know, the door happened to be open as we went up stairs to dress, and so I saw the whole of the interesting performance. People ought not to have their back-parlor doors open when they stand in such very endearing relations to each other. It is too tantalizing, it is indeed!"

And then the indefatigable little mimic twisted her pretty head on one side, and looking up to an imaginary Mr. Deeping, imitated Sarah Matilda's boarding-school smile, and the polished provincial accents in which, when Hugh, thoroughly wearied out, had got to the end of some tedious musical performance, she would remark—

"Oh! pray don't give over yet, Mr. Deeping. That is so sweetly pretty, and I do so enjoy a bass voice. I'm sure I've said over and over again if there's one thing I like better than *another, it is a good bass voice.* Now haven't *I, ma!*"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

But this time Rose Beresford's mimicry did not produce a smile. Mr. Lyneton and his sister exchanged glances which betrayed any thing but an amused appreciation of their young guest's imitative faculties, nor was she encouraged that evening to any further development of them.

Presently Mr. Lyneton went away into the library, where, had Rose listened, she might have heard him walking up and down for the next half-hour. A most unusual thing for him to do there, for his walking exercise was generally confined to that path by the old mouldering stone wall, where the mosses were blooming now so greenly, and the lichens staining it with many a patch of brown and gold. When he went into the library it was almost always for a quiet spell of reading in that great easy-chair by the fire, Rollo outstretched at his feet.

Gwendoline heard him, though, and she knew what was vexing him into that restless pacing to and fro. Gwendoline still sat by the table, putting stroke after stroke to the monk's head, which was nearly finished now—a quaint, grave-looking old fellow, with a face somewhat like Abbot Siward's, a face which might be trusted for betraying no secrets, which would never tell by smile or frown any thing that had better be kept quiet. Gwendoline's lips were tightly pressed together still, and the level brows were bent over the quiet gray eyes, which had a cold gleam in them now, like that which had puzzled Hugh Deeping so much the day before. For all the rest she was as calm as ever. Rose Beresford might have been ridiculing some one at the antipodes, for any interested notice which was taken of her playful nonsense.

Miss Lyneton had great self-control. It belonged to the family. Her mother's pride and her father's firmness blended in her own strong nature. There was scarcely any passion or emotion which she could not, if she chose, shut down and keep tightly hidden away beneath an exterior of perfect quietness and courtesy. But very bitter thoughts were brooding in her heart all the time, thoughts which only an honorable and truth-loving nature can know, when both truth and honor have been shamelessly set at naught. Much bitterer thoughts than those which had stirred her when on the ball night she stood by the fire in that oriel-room, drawing on her white gloves, waiting for the carriage to come round and take them to the Oresbridge Assembly Rooms.

Her scorn had been roused then, when she knew that Hugh Deeping had been trying to win Jeanie's affection, that he had so far forgotten the immeasurable distance which separated them as to dream of joining his interests with theirs. But it was only scorn, touched perhaps with surprise and pity that the young man should so grievously overstep his position, and presume upon the kindness which had been shown him. Now her indignation was stirred.

It was ignorance or presumption no longer against which she had to defend her niece, but falseness and duplicity. He had been amusing himself with Jeanie while he was bound to another. That pleasant face and frank, outspoken manner of his covered a false heart. She could almost have despised herself for having been so far deceived by them as to have reached out a friendly hand and lifted him for a little season from his low belongings to companionship with people whose finer tastes and more cultivated minds he seemed able to appreciate. Ah! these low-born people, there was no trusting them, these people whose ancestry had been swept together from the lanes and by-ways of plebeianism, who had no old memories to be faithful to, no honorable name to keep sacred from stain of unworthy deed, and hand it down, a pure and spotless heritage, to those who should bear it after them.

Falseness and duplicity, the very sins which the old Lynetons had always hated so, which none had ever dared or ever should dare to charge upon them. There was no forgiving of deceit, no bringing back again, even to distant toleration, of any one whose heart bore that black stain. Perhaps she might in time have pardoned the too lofty aspirations of an obscure counting-house clerk, who, dazzled by a little attention from those above him in rank, and fascinated, may be, by Jeanie's kindly manner, which sometimes went almost too far for the Lyneton reserve, had been drawn into an indiscreet freedom, and tempted to seek so much more than was his due; but meanness and falsehood she could never forgive, nor should any one who dealt in them ever have welcome to the old house at Lyneton Abbots again.

So Gwendoline thought to herself as she sat there by the lamp, working on at the monk's head until it was quite finished; that reverent, bended head which scarce seemed to have a thought save for the telling of its beads. She listened patiently enough to Rose's playful badinage, answering it now and then, when answer seemed needful, in a voice which, if not quite so light, told as little of deep or painful feeling. Only by the cold gleam in her eyes, and the sometimes harsher bend of the level brows, could any one guess at the brooding thoughts within.

By and by she made an excuse for leaving Miss Beresford, and went to her own room, the dormer-windowed room, with its black oak wainscoting and curiously-carved old-fashioned furniture; the room where her mother died, the room where she so often came to read Maurice Demeron's letters.

They were all there now, letters reaching over five long years of separation and suspense, carefully wrapped together in one of the partitions of that inlaid writing-table which had belonged to the first Mrs. Lyneton. Sometimes, when Jeanie and her brother were out, Gwendoline would come up into this room and read them all over *from the beginning*. Bright, pleasant, intelligent letters they were, such as might be read out aloud to any one, well expressed, well put together; just the picture of his every-day life, with here and there a clever hit at some fashionable foible, or a chance remark, which showed a keen, quick appreciation of character; all these put aside toward the close for questions about the old home at Lyneton Abbots, and the friends he still remembered there. Nothing romantic or sentimental in them, nothing either deeply reflective or philosophical, just friendly, every-day letters. But Gwendoline knew where, in many a seeming idle sentence, to find the sweet under-meaning which brought her sometimes so much gladness. Her own true heart held the magic tincture which, dropped upon those common words, turned them into fine gold.

There would not be many more of those letters now. Only five months and Maurice Demeron would be home again. She had been very faithful. Not once in all those years had she been to him untrue, even in thought or wish. Not in vain had he trusted one of the proud Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots, knowing that they were never false to any who believed in them. The constancy of the olden knights and ladies, who in generations past had lived so purely, and loved so truly, was not outlived in their descendants. They, too, could love as truly, and wait as patiently. Yes, and if needs be, die as fearlessly, too; for the Lynetons were ever faithful, even unto death. Coming home again, Maurice Demeron would find all that he had left five years ago; love not dimmed from its first bright steadfastness, trust not worn out for all these years of cruel waiting and suspense.. And if those cheeks had lost a little of their young roundness, and if those still gray eyes had a sadder look, and if the pale brown hair was folded over a brow which bore here and there the faintest touch of care, it was thought of him which had done it all. Surely he should love her not the less for any of these things, but only more, for the story of patient waiting which they told.

But it was not to read these letters, nor to quicken any sweet memories which they might hold, that Gwendoline Lyneton came up into her own room to-night. Though they lay so near that she need but stretch out her hand to unlock the old-fashioned writing-table, and unloose them from their silken band, they lay there untouched. No thought of them served to clear away the cloud from Miss Lyneton's brow, or to smooth out the lines of quiet scorn, which, now that none was near to note them, wrote themselves more plainly upon her face.

That playful mimicry of Rose Beresford's had done its bitter work. Her idle words, spoken without thought or purpose, just out of the emptiness of a shallow heart, would put sadness enough by and by into at least one life; put much more than sadness into it, something whose traces would not so easily pass away. Nay, perhaps they would make that life such as she herself, so daintily reared, so carefully shielded from outward taint of vice or impropriety, should behold

far off with great horror, thanking God that she was not so deeply stained, that she at least had never done any thing to make her friends ashamed of her, or to stir in their loving hearts one thought of pain.

Rose Beresford had often amused herself in that way before. Most likely she would often do so again. For she dearly loved, as she said, to make fun of people, to take off their little oddities, and hold them up to ridicule with a delicate playfulness which no one could ever be harsh enough to rebuke, it was so very bright and graceful. Indeed, Rose would not have been half so popular among her friends, she would not have won so much flattery, or been so eagerly sought after, but for that amusing gift of hers, that power of reproducing, with such humorous facility, the laughable side of life, seizing the merest little accidental peculiarity, and imitating it with all the added charm of exaggeration.

It was quite a gift, every one said; though while they watched her display it, an unspoken fear lurked behind all their laughter, lest some day that delicate satire might be turned upon themselves, and they in their turn provoke a smile, or have some little pet oddity of theirs used to finish off one of Rose's playful sallies.

No need to follow Miss Lyneton through all the thoughts which Rose's idle words had roused. Rose knew well enough they were but idle words. She had only spoken them to move a passing smile, to stir her friend out of what she thought was a gloomy mood, consequent upon Jeanie's departure. It was just her way of amusing herself, nothing more than that; and she would have laughed a merry, musical laugh, had any one ventured to tell her that mischief could lurk in words so lightly spoken, or that the gleam of an unsheathed sword might have been less dangerous than that playful sporting with untruth which she loved so well.

After a little while, though quite long enough for Miss Beresford to have almost forgotten that brief episode of harmless nonsense, Gwendoline came down stairs again to the oriel-room, and went through her duties as hostess as calmly and courteously as though nothing had ever occurred to ruffle her usual composure.

With the Lyneton people actions ever followed closely upon purposes. There was never much hesitation or delay over any thing they had to do, when once the need for doing it was clearly seen. That same evening Mr. Lyneton and his sister had a short consultation in the library, while Rose Beresford amused herself with some pretty piece of fancy-work, and wrote a very charming letter to one of her friends in Ireland, detailing at length the account of the Oresbridge county ball, with the various little flirtations which she had noticed during the evening; also particularizing the most elegant costumes, among which Miss Lyneton's, a rose-colored crape, with magnificent point lace on the sleeves and bosom, had struck her as being *remarkably striking.* And Miss Jeanie Lyneton, *an innocent little country maiden,* in white muslin and frosted ivy-leaves, had looked very pretty too, but not striking at all; no style about her, only a sort of May-dew and rosebud freshness, which would very soon wear off. And then Rose described the gentlemen with such playful raillery, and so many saucy hits at their divers peculiarities and identities, that the lady to whom the letter was addressed said, when she received it, that such a correspondent as Rose Beresford was worth half a score physicians' prescriptions for nervousness and lowness of spirits.

Next morning, the morning of the day on which Hugh Deeping came to the Manor House to assist in making up the accounts, and preparing a statement of expenses, a note was sent to his address in Grosmont Road, enclosing the amount of his salary up to the end of the year. Also stating that, in consequence of recent unpleasant circumstances, Mr. Deeping's services would no longer be required at Lyneton Abbots.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Hugh had been working with extra diligence that day at the Bellona iron works. Indeed, ever since his meeting with Miss Lyneton and her sister three days ago, he had been "going at it," as his fellow-clerks said, with almost frantic energy. He felt he must have some safety-valve for the anxiety which was gnawing at him all the more cruelly because he could not call himself to account for any misdemeanor grave enough to have merited such punishment. One thing, however, was certain, he had not grieved Jeanie. His offense, whatever it might be, had not turned her heart against him. Her look when they met that afternoon, just at the bend of the Lyneton Abbots road, if lacking the bright cheerfulness which he generally used to find in it, spoke of neither rebuke nor coldness.

And while Hugh could believe in Jeanie's steadfastness—while he could persuade himself that she was true to him, he did not care though all the world besides were up in arms against him. He had still one sure resting-place, whatever came to pass. There was still one who would believe in him for what he was, not for what slander or misrepresentation made him seem to be. Hugh felt as if he could bear any thing, and go through any amount of disagreeableness, and have any sort of odium cast upon him, and come out of it all at last brave and bright as ever, if only Jeanie Lyneton kept true to him, if only she would trust him that he was a noble and honorable man.

If Jeanie played him false, why, then he would give up at once. It would be no use believing in any body after that. He would go away altogether, set off to New Zealand, Australia, Greenland, anywhere where nobody knew him—where he could do as he liked, and be as wild as he chose, and lead a reckless, care-for-nobody life, and forget that he had ever loved

and trusted, and been deceived, as thousands of his fellow-men, just as foolish as himself, had loved and trusted, and then found themselves deceived. Then it would certainly be no use trying any more. All would indeed be over. He would shake hands with his hopes, and purposes, and good resolutions, say good-bye to them, and set his face resolutely toward a grand heroic despair.

But until then there was no need for such extreme measures. He would not have very long to wait. Only until Saturday afternoon, the time for going to Lyneton Abbots, when perhaps he might see Jeanie alone, and hear from her if any thing had gone wrong. At any rate, if it was any thing serious, Mr. Lyneton would tell him, and, at least, give him the opportunity of explaining himself, if offense had been given. Perhaps, after all, his uncomfortableness might only be the result of fancy. Miss Lyneton might have been annoyed by circumstances entirely unconnected with himself. And as unlucky urchins who chance to be near an irritated master sometimes get blows which are not intended for them, so he might have received a cold, rebuking glance, whose real mission had been in quite another direction. At any rate, so long as he had any duty to do, he would do it well, and wait patiently for the worst that could come after that.

It was in this spirit, full of hardihood and determination, ready to hold up his face against all the world, and claim his rights as a man and a gentleman, that Hugh Deeping came home from the Bellona iron works on Saturday afternoon, and was confronted by Mrs. Mallinson, with the note from Lyneton Abbots.

Mrs. Mallinson had not been quite so gracious to her lodger since the night of the county ball, when, instead of cheerfully availing himself of a whole long evening of uninterrupted intercourse with Sarah Matilda, he had made some excuse about a headache, or something of that sort, perhaps it might be hoarseness, Mrs. Mallinson could not exactly remember, and after just joining in with Sarah Matilda in one or two songs, had sallied out; neither of them knew where, and never made his appearance again until nearly bed-time. It was ungrateful. It was more than ungrateful, it was ungentlemanly. It was more than ungentlemanly, it was rude, positively rude, and Mrs. Mallinson could not have thought it of him, that he should so far have forgotten all the attention that had been paid him, and all the kindness that had been heaped upon him ever since he took the apartments, kindness which could not have been more unremitting even had the young man been her own son. She must say that she had never been quite able to get over it, and behave to him the same as before. People *had* feelings, and they had a right to have them considered. Mrs. Mallinson had had her misgivings about him for some time, though his handsome behavior about giving up the sitting-room for the use of *Mrs. and Miss* Beresford had rather brought her round again; but she must say ever since that night of the county ball it had been all she could do to be civil, and she really did not think she should ever ask him down stairs into the back parlor any more. Which would no doubt be a loss to him by and by, though he was very much taken up just now with the great folks at Lyneton Abbots. For every one knew that sort of thing could not last. Mr. Lyneton only wanted to get a little more work out of him, and when the estate had got itself turned round, and could hold together a little longer, they would quietly dismiss him, and he would be glad enough of a little comfortable friendly society in the back parlor.

But no, she should not welcome him into the back parlor then. He might enjoy himself as well as he could in the sitting-room up stairs, all alone by himself, with his cup of tea and his baker's lump, as he had such a very great fancy for retirement. It was well for people to learn wisdom by experience sometimes, and if he did not care just now for invitations in to supper, there were other people who did, as he might have found out the night before, if he had come down stairs and seen Mr. Reynolds so very attentive to Sarah Matilda, and turning over her music, and paying her every respect, which was a great deal more than he had ever done. And there were other businesses too, quite as satisfactory as the iron business, and quite as good for getting a young man on in the world; and for her part she could not see that a counting-house clerk was any such great thing after all, even if there *was* an advance of salary every quarter, which she very much doubted, or Mr. Deeping might be more liberal in his expenditure, and order a little something out of the shop now and then by way of relish instead of that baker's lump day after day and week after week, even less than a mechanic at three shillings a day would be content with. Mrs. Mallinson did not understand such meanness, if there *was* an advance every quarter.

So it was with no very gracious air that she gave Hugh the note which had been left by the trusty old servant-man from Lyneton Abbots.

Hugh wisely delayed opening it until his landlady had left the room. It was a very stately, frigid note, grim and pitiless as the old griffins who glared such stony defiance from the gate-way at Lyneton Abbots. A check for so many pounds, certainly many more than he had earned, and many more than he intended to keep, though that extra half-year's salary would have procured many a little comfort for his mother and sister, and a fine succession of delicacies out of the shop, which might almost have brought Mrs. Mallinson round again, had Hugh's conduct on the night of the county ball not alienated him forever from her regards. No explanation, either, of that cold rebuking look. Only a haughty reference to recent unpleasant circumstances, and a formal intimation that his services would cease to be required as heretofore in the management of Mr. Lyneton's accounts.

Hugh read the letter again and again, as though any amount of reading could make its meaning more palatable, or twist into a pleasanter shape its harsh, unwelcome message. And then he looked at the device upon the seal, pondered that over for a quarter of an hour. Hand and cross; faith and action. The Lynetons were true to the last part of their motto, certainly. No lack of promptitude in action. Hugh thought they might also have been as ready to trust. They might at any rate have believed in him as an honest man until they had proved him otherwise.

So then that terrible look had not missed its mark when it fell upon him. That vague, undefined feeling of uncomfortableness which had haunted him ever since he encountered Miss Lyneton and Jeanie in the Lyneton Abbots road, had been a true herald of coming disaster. All was over now. No more pleasant evenings in the old Manor House, no more fireside readings with Jeanie's sweet bright face turned toward his, yet turned away again with such quick shyness when looks of his fell too earnestly upon it. No more talking to each other through the words of those quaint old poets, whose warm thoughts, blossomed into rhyme, had spoken theirs too. No more grave pleasant courtesy from Miss Lyneton, courtesy given so frankly, yet with ever a lofty kindness which seemed to hold him far off. No more walks with Mr. Lyneton, quiet afternoon walks, in which so many other things were discussed than the mere money-matters of the estate; when they talked of men and books and thoughts, and of the great world of life around them, and Hugh felt his mind quickened and his powers sharpened by friction, and his own thoughts kindled into clearness and activity by being discussed with one who could both appreciate and question them. All this over, and why?

Yes, why? That was what vexed Hugh even more than the cold, curt note. He was wronged and suspected when he had looked for quite other treatment. He had worked well for Mr. Lyneton. He had given him the best of his talents. He had reduced the tangled confusion of those old balance-sheets and statements to something like order. A few months more and the work would have been done, the estate righted again and put upon a sure footing; and all this chiefly through energy and perseverance of his. Having proved him so far, did Mr. Lyneton now begin to distrust him? Did he think that he had served him with the mere slippery service of a hireling, who only labored for pay, and not for loving interest?

Or—and Hugh felt his cheeks grow angry-red at the thought—did Mr. Lyneton suppose that he had cheated him in any of the work that he had done? Did they think that these hands of his had been reached out to grasp more than their due? Did Mr. Lyneton think that the man who had sat by his fireside and been treated *by him as* a friend could meanly have taken *advantage of his confidence*, and used that very trust to betray him? Was this what Mr. Lyneton meant by "recent unpleasant circumstances?" Was this, then, all that he had toiled for, to be dismissed as a cheat, turned away from his work without even an accusation, without the opportunity of defending himself or throwing back, so proudly as he could have thrown back, any slur which they might seek to cast upon his honor? Was this the way of the old Lyneton people? Was this the kindness that high descent of theirs had taught them? Hugh Deeping thought those brave old knights who slept in St. Hilda's Church would not so have treated any man who had toiled for them as he had toiled for Mr. Lyneton.

And Jeanie. Would she believe it? Would she turn against him, too? Jeanie, who he felt belonged to him, spite of all these puny barriers of caste and degree—plate-glass of convention, cold and hard, but which he felt with one strong blow he could shiver, and reach out his hand to take her for his own. Would they ever make her think that he whom she had trusted with her love could not be trusted with her father's gold? Tried and found wanting in so small a thing as that, would she have faith in him for any thing higher?

That thought settled Hugh. He could bear any thing else, but he could not bear that Jeanie should doubt him.

Stay, that was not it—he never thought in his very heart that she would doubt him; he thought he had that trust in her faithfulness which would hold him to her, however far they had been parted; and he felt she had that trust in him which would not let her doubt. Only it angered him that she should even be tempted to doubt; that even one passing suspicion should ever have leave to ruffle the perfect trust of which he always resolved to be worthy. They might think what they would of him. They might bring against him what slander they chose. They might thrust him out from his place among them, a place which themselves had given him, with no seeking of his. All this he was willing to bear. It might wound him sorely; it would not be a wound unto death. But they should never make her doubt him. He would at least clear himself to her, and keeping her love and trust still, all the rest was indeed of little worth.

So Hugh Deeping set off there and then, with all these angry thoughts stirring and rankling in his heart, to Lyneton Abbots, there to demand what every true man has a right to demand, the reason why his character had been tarnished, and his honor stained.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Hugh Deeping felt very heroic as he went along that quiet country road, between the budding hedge-rows, at whose roots bloomed many a purple patch of violet, and star-like cluster of

pale primrose; where, too, had he looked, he might have found bright-eyed daisies opening their rosy-fringed lids, under green beds of chick-weed, or side by side with the brave yellow buttercups, which never feared March frost, or shrank from its biting winds.

But Hugh never looked for them. He was thinking all the way how he should confront old Mr. Lyneton with the fearless grandeur of innocence; how he would make him feel, shut in as he was by that stately pride of his, that he, too, Hugh Deeping, was a man, and a gentleman, in virtue of the gentle soul, as true a patent of nobility as a name crusted with the mould of antiquity, and sculptured on graves over which the damps of half a thousand years had fallen. What worth was there in all the world save the worth of clean hands and an honest heart? Taking these, you took from a man what no Norman blood and no lofty name could give him, the right to be called one of God Almighty's gentlemen. And these Mr. Lyneton had tried to take from him, and these he would never give up, these he would fight for to the last. They belonged to him, the poor counting-house clerk, with a right as clear and unquestionable as that by which the proudest baron in England held his ancestral acres. And sooner should that proudest baron wander forth from his home, beggared and defenseless, with no longer a foot of ground to call his own, or one of all those countless menials of his to give him daily bread, than he, Hugh Deeping, should yield up one iota of his honor, or one fraction of that brave independence which, as yet, he had never, by dishonest word or deed, lost the right to wear.

Thinking such thoughts as these, he arrived, in no very calm or collected frame of mind, at Lyneton Abbots. The gray-headed serving-man received him courteously enough, and ushered him into the library, where his Saturday afternoon business was usually transacted.

Mr. Lyneton was out, the old man said, in reply to Hugh's first inquiry.

Then could he see Miss Lyneton?

The man disappeared, and presently brought back a message that his mistress was engaged, and could not speak with Mr. Deeping.

Might he see Miss Lyneton's niece, then?

To which the old man replied that Miss Jeanie was not at home. She had gone to London the day before with Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, and was not expected to return for some weeks. And having given that information, he held the library door open, as though to intimate to the visitor that he might depart at his earliest convenience.

Which Hugh made haste to do. As he went out under the ponderous old porch, in which, not a week ago, he had stood with Jeanie's hand in his, the iron-barred door clanging behind him seemed to bid him away, and shut upon him forever the welcome he had once had to the stately old home of Lyneton Abbots. His day was over there. He need *go no more* now. Those iron bars and bolts were not more strong than the will of the strong man who had closed them against him.

More angry than ever, Hugh retraced his steps to Oresbridge, back again to the provision-dealer's shop, and the cheap-fine sitting-room, with its perfume of coffee and smoked hams. He felt completely mortified and humiliated. He had set off to Lyneton Abbots full of such a noble scorn, ready to defend himself with bitter, burning eloquence against false accusation and cruel injustice; ready to throw down the gauntlet before Mr. Lyneton, daring that stately old man to mar by even thought or suspicion of blame aught that he had done. And after having poured out all this torrent of indignation, and crushed his aristocratic defamer by the sublime force of innocence, he should return and face all the world with a braver front than ever, feeling himself more of a man because of the very bitterness of the strife which he had been compelled to wage.

But instead of any thing of this kind, instead of quitting the presence of his injurers with the proud consciousness of triumphant innocence, he found himself simply flattened down beneath an extinguisher of cold contempt, his explanations not listened to, himself not even allowed the opportunity of presenting them, to say nothing of following them up by any burning words of scorn and indignation. He wished he had been firm; he wished he had insisted upon an interview with Mr. or Miss Lyneton, and poured out upon them, while it was yet newly kindled, all the fierce torrent of his anger. He could have made them shrink and cower, he knew he could, for this their injustice. He could have convinced them that truth, and honor, and bravery, ay, and pride, too, might find their home quite elsewhere than in natures stiffened with ancestral pomp, and warped by the worn-out prejudices of caste and degree. But it was too late now. He had let the opportunity go by.

He felt so angry as he hurried home along that quiet country road, through the frosty March air. He felt as if he wanted to fight somebody. It would have been such a relief to him to have knocked somebody down, regardless of five shillings and costs next morning. Or if there had been a street row that he could have joined in, just to work off a little of that passionate discontent. He was quite equal to any thing of that kind. He could have entered into it with such hearty good-will, and done such vigorous execution with those strong arms of his. But there was no commotion of that sort going on when he reached Grosmont Road. The street was very quiet, only the usual clusters of dirty little boys hanging round the pastry-cook's window, and a few milk-girls clinking their pails, and now and then an organ-man, grinding away at some worn-out old ditty; nothing whatever to get up an excitement about, or to draw away any of the superfluous energy which seemed goading him on to action of some kind.

At last he came to the provision-dealer's shop,

where, this being Saturday, the busiest evening of the week, Mr. Mallinson was bustling about with unusual alacrity, weighing out pounds of sugar, dissecting hams, digging his taster into wedges of cheese, and then handing it across the counter to some thrifty manager who was laying in her weekly supply of Cheshire or Gloucestershire; interspersing all these various operations with a brisk, running fire of criticisms upon the weather, and the price of bacon, and the possibility of sugars coming down before the summer set in.

Hugh hurried across the shop, quite unmindful of Mr. Mallinson's passing remark—

"Fine night, sir; glasses holding up nicely; hope you left all well at Lyneton Abbots."

And up stairs, three steps at a time, to his sitting-room, where he began to tramp up and down with such heavy-footed vehemence that Mrs. Mallinson sent Betsy to know if any thing was the matter. Hugh was very much tempted to return a message in accordance with the state of his feelings, and request Mrs. Mallinson to mind her own business, without interfering with his; but he had prudence enough to control himself for once, and returned answer that nothing was the matter. Whereupon Mrs. Mallinson sent Betsy up again with her compliments, and would Mr. Deeping be so kind as to make a less noise, for Miss Sarah Matilda had some friends in to tea, and it disturbed their conversation.

Betsy did not wait for a reply, which might have been given in more forcible and less courteous terms than the previous one. But she gathered up Mr. Deeping's boots, which he had thrown into separate corners of the room, and went down stairs with them, muttering to herself as she did so, for she had never got quite reconciled to the cleaning of an extra pair of Wellingtons every morning—

"He's a-going to look out for something else, mind if he isn't. I've seen this good bit past, as the missis don't lay herself out to please him same as she used to when first he comed."

Finding himself debarred from even the slight relief of walking up and down the room, Hugh had recourse to the letter again, and for the fiftieth time read it over with no better success than before. Ponder it as he would, this was all the information he could get out of it, cold and formal enough too—

"Mr. Lyneton encloses a check for the amount of Mr. Deeping's yearly salary, and begs to inform him that in consequence of recent unpleasant circumstances, his services will no longer be required at Lyneton Abbots."

This from Jeanie's father!—this from the man whom he would have served to the very limit of his strength, not for reward, but only for the love he bore to her. It was certainly very hard. It was almost enough to make him give up his new-found faith in human goodness and truth.

But Hugh was determined to know the reason of this sudden overclouding of a sky which only *one little week ago had* looked so bright. Hours *seemed days while they brought* with them this slow, galling suspense. He would write to Mr. Lyneton this very night, and demand from him an explanation of this sudden withdrawal of his confidence from one who had always held that confidence sacred. He would stand upon his rights as a gentleman, and claim a detail of these "unpleasant circumstances," whatever they might be, which had so rudely and cruelly broken the pleasant bond of social intercourse. He would at least know why he had been wronged, for that was a knowledge which no one had the power to withhold from him.

So Hugh sat down at once to put his resolve into practice. He spoiled about five-and-twenty sheets of good cream-laid note-paper before he produced an epistle which common sense told him would be at all suitable to the occasion. His first onslaught was violent and declamatory, just a tirade of reproach and self-justification. Forgetful alike of dignity, position, respect due to age, or indeed any thing but his own angry pride, he poured out the full tide of his feelings in half a dozen crowded pages, which, had Mr. Lyneton read them, would certainly not have heightened his opinion of Mr. Deeping's discretion and self-control. But remembering that he was writing to Jeanie's father, Hugh tore that up and set to work upon another. This second attempt deepened unconsciously into pleading and entreaty, both of which, when he came to read it calmly over, were spurned as unworthy of a man who had done no wrong. So that followed the first to the flames. So did a third, which degenerated, before it was half done, into craven submission; and a fourth, which rose into lofty scorn, and even defiance. And these were followed by others, all of them halting midway, like those childish rhymes of Rose Beresford's, until evening set in, and unless Hugh wished to spend the coming Sabbath in his present unbearable state of suspense, he must decide upon something and get it dispatched forthwith.

He made one more desperate effort, and this time completed a short, business-like note, in which, with as much dignity as he could command, he requested an explanation of the unpleasant circumstances to which Mr. Lyneton alluded; and also returned the check, it being in advance of the sum to which his period of service entitled him.

Hugh was satisfied with that note. It was just such as any gentleman might have written to any other gentleman—brief, concise, courteous. It could not fail, he thought, to produce an explanation, perhaps even a conciliation. For, though wounded and very angry, he could not bring himself to think yet with any thing but heavy sadness of the closing up of a friendship which had once been so pleasant. He could not quite cast away the last little lingering rays of hope, and put those choice Saturday evenings among the joys of the past—joys which would never, never come to him any more.

He folded up his letter, addressed it in a fine, flowing, fearless hand, and gave the apprentice boy a shilling to run with it to Lyneton Abbots

after the shop was closed and bring him an answer back. He was to be sure and have an answer; and if they told him that Mr. Lyneton was engaged, and could not write just then, he was to say that he could wait; but he must take an answer back with him either from Mr. or Miss Lyneton.

Then Hugh sat down by his solitary fireside with a large volume of Shakespeare open upon his knee, in order that if Mrs. Mallinson came into the room unawares, as she used sometimes, to see whether the gas was turned on too high, or the fire upheaped more than was consistent with the stipulated agreement for coals, she might be beguiled into the notion that he was enjoying his quiet evening as much as usual. And there he waited, with such patience as he could muster, for that note from Lyneton Abbots, which should either bring back the former sunshine, or shut it away from him forever.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Not much more than an hour had elapsed before Mr. Mallinson's apprentice boy made his appearance with the eagerly-expected note. Its contents, whatever they might be, could not have cost Mr. Lyneton quite so much time and thought as poor Hugh spent over his communication. The check was re-enclosed, with a request that Mr. Lyneton might not again be annoyed by its return. The recent unpleasant circumstances of which Mr. Deeping sought an explanation were not in any way connected with the management of the accounts which had been entrusted to him; and if Mr. Deeping's own sense of honor, and his consciousness of the position which he held with respect to the family at Lyneton Abbots, were not sufficient to indicate the impropriety of the line of conduct which he had pursued, Mr. Lyneton deemed it unnecessary to enter upon further explanations. The note closed with a polite intimation that Mr. Deeping might now consider the correspondence between him and Mr. Lyneton as at an end.

Poor Hugh! He had but sunk deeper in the mire through this vain effort to extricate himself from it. He had but escaped the imputation of dishonorableness or incompetency in business matters, to incur the worse imputation of seeking to force himself into a position of which he was unworthy. With such a cool, lofty courtesy he was reminded of his "inferior position;" he who by mind and education, if not by the mere accident of birth, stood proudly level with his supercilious master. Nay, much more than level with him, for Hugh had won for himself, by hard study, and the sheer force of his own intelligence, a far higher standing-place, as regarded literary attainments, than all Mr. Lyneton's years of travel, and association *with cultivated minds*, had been able to give him. Was he, Hugh Deeping, with his fine tastes, his varied acquirements, the large and liberal ideas which a good education had given him, to be taunted with his "inferior position" by a man who, in none of these things, stood superior to him? Was there, then, nothing in the world that could make a man worthy save a name that had been worn by knights and courtiers five centuries ago? Was it nothing to have clean hands and an honest heart, and to be able to look the whole world in the face, daring it to accuse him of aught unmanly? Was it his fault that circumstances had cast him down from a position as honorable as even Mr. Lyneton's, and forced him to toil in a counting-house for his daily bread? Ought not that very misfortune, bravely conquered by him, to have strengthened his claim on a true man's sympathies, instead of shutting him out from them? Ought it not to have opened wide for him the gate of friendship; not barred that gate against him?

And then he was coolly reminded—as if indeed he had ever forgotten it—of his sense of honor, the very thing on which he most of all prided himself. For when had any one known him to do a mean action? When had he taken advantage of the weak, or bowed himself in homage to the strong? That name of his might not be graven on tombstones five centuries old, beneath emblazoned coats-of-arms and splendid heraldic devices, such as the chancel end of St. Hilda's Church could show; it had never been greatly known in courts or palaces, or made famous on bloody battle-fields; but if it lacked such distinction as that, it did not lack the finer distinction of honesty and truth. It was a name that none need blush to wear, albeit unallied as yet to very shining deeds. And if, instead of idly taking the worth which others had left behind, he was trying to make himself worthy, to live so that those who came after him might not be ashamed of him, was that less honorable than shining in the borrowed light of dead greatness, and using the splendid memories of the past to hide the pitiful smallness of the present? Sense of honor! Hugh thought there were things more honorable than to condemn a man untried, and to take away his character without even giving him the chance of defending it.

Poor preparation this for Hugh's Sunday-morning devotions, if, indeed, there could be any devotion possible to a heart so angry and discontented. But there was one resource left. He could write to Jeanie. She at least would understand him. She had had faith in him all along. She had trusted him and discerned the real, true heart of him through all vexing hindrances of misfortune and circumstances. There was hope for him; he could bear any thing, wait any length of time, work patiently on through whatever of hard toil and endeavor lay before him; nay, even endure to be misunderstood, and undervalued by every one else, if only she remembered him still, and had faith in him.

He would write to her, and if she gave him up, why then all would be over.

He had heard Miss Lyneton speak of their Aunt Hildegarde, and he knew the part of London in which she lived, for sometimes when he was leaving Lyneton Abbots they had given him letters to post for her at Oresbridge. So he wrote to Jeanie, and told her all his troubles; told her how he had been wronged, doubted, mistrusted; how, without the opportunity of explaining any thing, or justifying himself from any imaginary wrong, he had been dismissed from the trust which he had always tried to fulfill so faithfully, which had never suffered from any neglect of his, and never should have suffered so long as he held it. But he told her, too, how he could bear it if only she had faith in him and would wait patiently until he could work his way up to the place which he felt belonged to him, a place which even she need not be ashamed to share with him.

That letter did not cost so much thought as the other, written an hour or two before. No need to stay for well-chosen words which should express, with suitable dignity and self-control, the feelings of a man who felt himself wronged, yet was too proud to plead against it. Hugh's heart dictated the letter to Jeanie, not his sense of honor or his wounded trust. And he felt so sure that when Jeanie read it all would be right again. For he had such faith in her. He knew she would never think harshly of him, or believe any idle tales against him. And while they had trust in each other, and while, however far separated, they could each rest in the quiet thought of love, held fast through all trial and waiting, there was hope. Nay, there was much more than hope. They *could* not lose each other.

Hugh wrote and posted his letter the same night. Sunday passed, Monday and Tuesday. He had studied through whole college terms, and not felt them so long and dreary as those three days. He might have been too late for the post on Saturday night; he was not quite sure when the London letters went out from Oresbridge. And then he remembered with a great throb of relief that there was no Sunday delivery in town, a fact which he had quite forgotten when he sent his letter. Jeanie could not get it, then, until Monday morning, and she might not know the London regulation about letters for the country. She might think that they could be posted late at night, just the same as she used to post them at Lyneton Abbots, in which case, of course, he should not get it until the afternoon delivery.

But it did not come by the afternoon delivery, nor by the next morning's delivery either, and Hugh must plod through another long weary day at the Bellona works before that terrible suspense was ended — suspense which seemed worse to him, far, far worse than all the six months of labor and toil which he had had since he came to Oresbridge. But he was quite sure *it would be ended, and brightly* ended, too. He *had never any other thought* than that.

The letter did indeed find its way safely enough to the grand, stately old house at the West End of London, and was there taken possession of by Aunt Hildegarde, who always emptied the contents of the post-bag herself. And seeing the Oresbridge post-mark upon it, missing, also, the Lyneton Abbots crest, which ought to have been on all Jeanie's Oresbridge letters, and deciphering through her gold-rimmed spectacles, instead of that time-honored device of hand and cross, the quite commonplace initials, H. D., she very prudently said nothing at all to her niece about the letter, but sent it unopened to her nephew, Mr. Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots. And Mr. Lyneton, knowing the handwriting well enough, for he had scores of duplicates of it in the bureau where he kept his estate accounts, put it into a blank cover, and re-addressed it to Mr. Hugh Deeping, care of Mr. Mallinson, provision-dealer, Grosmont Road, not without a little surprise at the pertinacity of a young man who required so very much putting down before he could be made to understand the behavior suitable to his position.

It was lying on Hugh's sitting-room table, side by side with the solitary cup and saucer and baker's "lump," when he came home from the Bellona iron works on Wednesday evening.

Hugh tore it open, threw the envelope into the fire, as was his custom, and found his own letter—the letter into which he had poured so much love and trust, in which he had told out all his heart, its hope, fear, pain, longing—sent back to him unopened.

A sweet gift, truly, after so long a waiting—a pleasant surprise to close that day of toil and weariness, which had only been endured at all because he was so sure there would be sunshine at the end of it. A sweet gift, truly; but he must not stand there by the fire, staring at it as though it had dropped upon him out of the clouds. He must throw himself carelessly into the easy-chair, and look quite comfortable and unconcerned, for Betsy had just come up stairs with the tea-kettle, and Mrs. Mallinson's compliments, and would Mr. Deeping be so kind as not to turn the gas up so high, for the smoke was affecting the ceiling, which it never used to do when the family occupied the room themselves. And would he be as good as leave out the money for the grocer's bill? The lad had called for it twice that week, and Mrs. Mallinson never liked the tradesmen being kept waiting for their accounts.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THEN Betsy went down stairs again, leaving him to the companionship of his returned letter, and any reflections he might have to make thereupon.

Just the letter, unopened, without a word of sympathy or regret, not even an explanation of the change of feeling which had led her to re-

turn it at all. Doubtless Miss Jeanie Lyneton intended his own "sense of honor" and "consciousness of the position which he occupied toward the Manor House family" to supply that trifling deficiency.

So Jeanie too had turned against him. Jeanie, who ten days ago had let her hand lie in his, who had spoken to him so trustfully, so lovingly, as though nothing in the world could come between them. Those gentle, pleasant words of hers, that frank smile, that shy yet guileless look, which betrayed, even while it sought to hide the loving heart within, had all been just a web of deceit. She had only been amusing herself with him, practicing upon him down there in that quiet home, before she tried the same performance on a larger scale in the great world of London society. It was an elegant game for a young lady, and she had played it very elegantly too, he falling in so completely with all her pretty moves and devices, not knowing how soon and how cruelly he should be checkmated. Oh, Jeanie! And he had thought her so innocent. He had had such boundless faith in her. She had been the awakener of his best life; he had looked to her to strengthen and sustain it too. All that he wished to do, all that he wished to be, was only for her dear sake; that he might become more worthy of her, that he might climb slowly, step by step, past all those vexing bars of rank and caste, and hold out to her one day a hand which her own need not reach so very far down to take.

Hugh was on the edge of a deep pitfall. He might even yet, by one brave effort, turn away from it and keep in the safe path, though that was indeed a gloomy path. The night was very dark, but there was a Hand that would have guided him still and brought him out again to the sunshine at last. Or he might take the other step; it was but a single step, and fall into the horrible pit and the miry clay, out of which, if he ever came at all, it would be with many a wound, whose scar could never be quite healed in this life.

Hugh took that one step. He thought of the past six months in which he had labored so hard, labored not only with brain and hand for daily bread, but with the far harder labor of soul to crush down unworthy thoughts, and conquer selfish motives, and cherish a pure, lofty inner life. He thought of his prayers so useless, his faith so misspent and vain. He thought of Jeanie, her guileless trustful smile, which had the sting of the serpent in it; her feigned love, which had wrought such mischief for him. He looked at his letter, sent back to him without a word; gave up what next to a man's giving up his faith in God is the saddest renunciation of all, his faith in woman's truth, and then worked off his indignation in a loud, harsh voice, so loud that Mrs. Mallinson heard it down stairs in the back parlor, and thought Mr. Deeping must be getting touched in his intellects.

He *could not help it.* All seemed such a *hollow mockery. God's* goodness, woman's faith, man's honor—he had better join in and mock too, loudly as the rest. Life itself, for any thing he knew, might just be one great piece of mockery too, in which the louder one could laugh and the madder one could be, the merrier. And then, as the song said, that weird, uncomfortable song he had once heard Miss Lyneton sing—

"The sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep."

And good-bye to all the nonsense and heartlessness and deception that made life here such pitiful fool's play.

That was Hugh's thought. Hugh who once made such high resolves, and planned out for himself such a very noble path, and looked forward to winning great influence over his fellowmen, doing them so much good, helping them on in the true way, holding out his light that they, seeing it, might walk more surely, and come safely to the mountain-top at last. And where was his light now, and where was any good that he could do? And what was the use of toil and trust and love if they served him so, if all they could do for him was to land him in such a pitfall as this? He had better have let them alone. He was much happier before he knew any thing about them.

Mr. Lyneton had done the thing handsomely, though, after all. Six months' salary paid without the trouble of earning a penny of it; a whole six months of Saturday afternoon holidays, with no loss of pay. He could afford a few jollifications now with his fellow-clerks at the Bellona iron works, fashionable, fast young men, who had asked him so many times to join them in their tavern dinners, or to take an oar with them when they rowed down the river sometimes on a Sunday afternoon to have a merry-making at the Castle Gardens, a few miles out of town. And Hugh, poor, foolish fellow! had turned from them with such utter distaste. He drink at low tavern dinners, who could sit in that quaint old oriel-room at Lyneton Abbots, and listen to Jeanie's voice, and feel her quiet eyes upon him, eyes so pure and loving? *He* join in riotous Sunday afternoon merry-making down the river, who had sat in St. Hilda's Church, and prayed the same prayers with Jeanie, and felt his thoughts lifted heavenward with the same noble words which lifted hers thither, too? No; small need of tavern dinners, or Sunday merry-making for him, who had a sweet, bright life, so far above them.

But now all that sort of thing had passed away. He might as well be gay. It lasted as long as any thing, indeed very much longer than some things lasted, woman's truth among the rest. He would go next time they asked him, and be as merry as the rest of them.

That is if he stayed at the Bellona iron works, which seemed very uncertain now. For counting-house drudgery would seem slower than ever after this, unless he took the extra work which Mr. Feverige had offered him in the cashier's room, at an advance of salary. And there was no great inducement now to

earn more money for the sake of finishing his college course, or getting those coveted years of study in Germany. He go to college and be a divinity student again, and set himself up for a teacher of others! Hugh laughed outright again, more loudly than before. He could teach them one thing at any rate; not to believe too much, and not to trust at all.

No, he would like to be out of the country altogether—perhaps off to New Zealand. He had heard that a pleasant thing might be made of life out there among the scrub, for a set of young fellows who were not afraid of roughing it, or having a breeze now and then with the natives. And Hugh felt as if he could thoroughly enjoy roughing it, or sparring with the natives even to within an inch of his life. That was the very thing he could enter into, under present circumstances. Or the gold diggings. That was a fine opening, they said, for a young man. Or he might go with his cousin, the mate of the ship *Lucy*, on a whaling expedition to Greenland. Best of all that, for there was plenty of excitement and daring and adventure in a little excursion of that sort. The *Lucy* was outward bound in a month or two, suppose he was to join her and try his skill at whaling? At any rate it would be a contrast to keeping accounts at the Bellona iron works, or reading early English romances to faithless young ladies, who praised his sweet voice and then played him so false.

Only—and Hugh thought of a little cottage far away out in Jersey. A little cottage he had not seen now, except in dreams, for six months; with Virginian creepers twining over the windows, and a sea-breeze stirring the leaves in the garden, and a gentle, quiet woman—his mother—sitting at that window, thinking of him, or perhaps kneeling by a white-curtained bed, praying for him; asking that the merciful God would take care of him and keep him from the vice and wickedness of the great town of Oresbridge, and lead him into green pastures and beside still waters, and help him to make a noble and a worthy thing of his life. Asking God to do all this for him; the merciful God who seemed quite to have forgotten him and cast him away, who was showing him nothing of life now but its exceeding bitterness, and leading him into any thing but green pastures. Hugh could have laughed again, only the thought of his widowed mother, praying for him, kept him from it. But what was the use of praying, and where was the mercifulness of letting a poor lad be deceived, and betrayed, and wronged; a poor lad who had tried to do his best, and live a decent, honest life? And if this was the blessed fruit of righteousness, it was a fruit one could be well content not to taste.

Still it was very kind of his mother to pray for him, and the thought of her doing it made Hugh pause in his wild schemes for the future. Greenland was doubtless a very fine place for *cooling a young man's overheated* excitement; *the very name of it had a sound* of frozen calmness, like Miss Lyneton's voice. And one could get sport enough among the New Zealand scrub, or out in the gold diggings of Ballarat, if sport was the only thing to be thought about. But neither Greenland whaling expeditions, nor heroic encounters with natives among New Zealand scrub, nor a year or two's experience with the choice society of the gold diggings, would furnish him with quarterly five-pound notes for that mother of his who had done so much for him—who was even now thinking of him and praying for him, who had denied herself so many comforts that he might have years of college study; who, unable to do that for him any longer, was dependent now upon him for the little help which would keep herself and his sister from actual want. No; he must go back to the Bellona iron works, and do what forgetting he had to do there, among its blazing furnaces and fiery serpents of red-hot iron—Hugh knew worse fiery serpents than those now—and its mailed puddlers and its din of steam hammers and boiler-plate rollers. No wild life of daring and adventure for him; no casting off of old memories in the perilous excitement of new dangers. What had been must be again, and he must bear it patiently as he could.

So Hugh Deeping went back again to the Bellona iron works. Went back not sad-hearted and silent, with the sadness and the silence of a man who has known great disappointment, yet will struggle through it to something nobler than he was before; conquering his enemy, and taking that very enemy to clear his way to fresh victories. He went back with the rash daring of the man who, shaken in his trust for others, resolves to trust no longer either God or his friend—only himself. A feeble trust that, even for the man whose heart is stout and strong, but trust weaker than any bruised reed for him who, knowing little of life, leans upon that which he has never proved; which can only pierce him through in the day of his bitterest need.

And there, week after week, Hugh labored on with desperate energy, wearing out brain and sinews in the toil; not resting them much when, with a set of jolly companions, he rowed down the river on a Sunday afternoon, for a merry-making in the Castle Gardens, or sang songs with his fellow-clerks at those roisterous tavern dinners, where he was always maddest and merriest; no jokes so bright as his, no wit so sparkling, no stories so piquant and racy.

A careless, free-and-easy life. Only doing his work properly, and keeping correct hours at Mrs. Mallinson's, it was nobody's concern but his own. So long as he paid his rent punctually, and left out the money for the tradesmen's accounts, and kept his gas turned down to a proper degree of moderation, and smoked no cigars in the sitting-room, and brought no young men in with him to spoil the carpet with their dirty boots; and never kept them waiting for him at night, while he stayed out at some

social gathering, setting the table in a roar with his flashes of merriment, it was of little consequence to Mrs. Mallinson where his holiday leisure was spent. The prophecies concerning the Lyneton Abbots affair had come to a most triumphant fulfillment. There were no more Saturday evenings with the young ladies now, no more books, with the Lyneton crest upon them, brought home to read, and so carefully treasured up in brown-paper covers on the safest shelf of the recess cupboard. Of course she knew very well what all that sort of thing would come to. Mr. Lyneton had had his own ends to serve, and he had served them. People said the estate was looking up again now. There was no need for an assistant, and so the young man had been dismissed; she hoped without any reflection on his character, but certainly the dismissal had been somewhat sudden. She had her own suspicions that things were not quite as they ought to be. There was no mention made, if she remembered rightly, of the engagement only lasting six months. It looked strange, to say the least of it.

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed.

Not that it was of much consequence now, though, what Mr. Deeping's prospects might be, or under what circumstances he had ceased to pay those Saturday afternoon visits to Lyneton Abbots. Mrs. Mallinson was happy to say that, if he did not appreciate his privileges in being welcomed into the back parlor, other people did, and there were other businesses quite as lucrative as any thing in the way of iron; and young Mr. Reynolds, who had just opened a large confectioner's shop in one of the most public streets of Oresbridge, and who had taken the vacant sitting in No. 25 Grosmont Road Chapel, and who always escorted Sarah Matilda home on a Sunday night, was every thing that could be desired, and of first-rate business habits, and on the high-road to a country house, and every thing that was comfortable. And for Mrs. Mallinson's part, she was very thankful that things had gone no further than they had with the new lodger, because this prospective settlement was in every way so much more advantageous.

Hugh Deeping, then, was not greatly interfered with by his landlady, nor honored with any more invitations into the back parlor when Sarah Matilda had company. And so long as he did his work well, and kept those long columns of figures correctly added up, and had his monthly statements ready for the senior partner to overlook, and paid the workmen's wages regularly, Mr. Feverige had no right, neither had he any disposition, to inquire further.

So he launched out into a reckless, care-for-nothing life, such as most men live, who, as the common phrase is, take hold of their troubles by the wrong handle. He kept up a respectable appearance at his lodging, never indulging in any violent extravagance or startling Mrs. Mallinson's propriety by introduction of his jolly companions into her showily-furnished sitting-room. And he wrote home as usual to his mother and sister, careless, off-hand letters, out of which he kept carefully enough all stain of bitterness or disappointment. There was no need for them to be troubled by the sort of life he was leading. There was no need for his mother to know how vain were those prayers of hers that her only boy might be kept from the follies and perils of the great town of Oresbridge. Let her pray on, while she could. Sometimes there shone into his heart, as night shows the reflection of glimmering stars far down in some dark well, memories of the old happy time when he thought of God, and loved Jeanie, and had faith in a noble future. But they were growing fewer and fewer as the clouds gathered, and the mists thickened. By and by they would all be gone.

Hugh Deeping lived this life, until the Great Father, who, unremembered, remembers his children with a love that knows no change, laid his hand quietly upon it, and bid its feverish pulses be still for a little season.

That Wednesday evening, when Hugh came home from the Bellona works, and found the letter which he had written to Jeanie returned unopened, a fair-haired, mustached gentleman of military aspect was reading the *Times* in a first-class carriage on the line from London to Oresbridge.

It was Maurice Demeron.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Some men, when trouble or disappointment crosses their path, battle with it in brave silence, asking no help save from above; and when the strife is over, the enemy beneath their feet, they go on calmly as before, none ever knowing how fierce that strife has been, none seeing the wounds which they hide so quietly, and bear so patiently.

Others make a very bitter outcry when the world goes wrong with them. They call together their friends and neighbors, asking for help and sympathy, unveiling their sharp particular grief to any one who will cast a pitying eye upon it, murmuring like a hurt child for the pain which they have not pride enough to conceal. And some, again, cruelly wounded, fight on more madly than before, thinking by dealing heavier blows on every side to deaden the smart of their own, which, however, refuses so to be healed.

Of this last sort was Hugh Deeping. He asked no sympathy from any one in his great trouble. He did not strive with it for a season, gravely, earnestly, until it lay beneath his feet, conquered, as all sorrow may be conquered by him who battles with it right nobly. But having received the dart into his breast, he hurried away with it, thinking in a wild, desperate life to stifle its pain, and by and by forget it.

He was of a hasty, impulsive nature, open

alike to good and evil influences. A year ago, that heavy sorrow of his father's death, bringing as it did a cloud over all his future life, had well-nigh crushed the spring out of him. But readily as he had been wounded, so readily did he receive the balm which should heal that wound. He had none of the lofty pride which refuses to be comforted. His was not that stern, strong nature which makes a companion of its woe, taking counsel with it as a man with his friend. If he was easily cast down by difficulties which a cooler temperament would have met with quiet disdain, he never put away from him the outstretched hand of relief, or nursed his disappointment in secret, when, by casting it from him, he might travel more quickly on.

That Sunday morning in Lyneton Abbots church had put new life into him. Coming home again through the sweet October sunshine, he felt as if nothing could ever conquer him again; as if that divine and human love which together seemed to have sprung up within his heart, would sustain him through any trial, and give him patience for any waiting. Every thing wore a brighter aspect for him after that. Even his daily task-work, which the day before had vexed him so with its poor worthlessness, had now a new meaning in it. It was no longer to be scorned, or only done with mechanical patience. It was God's message to him, and rightly read would teach him a lesson all divine. He felt such new spring and energy within him, the dawning of a bright day into whose hours he would crowd so much of noble toil and lofty endeavor.

For awhile after that, life went on very smoothly with him. He knew that he was growing toward the light. Daily he was laying the strong hand of self-restraint on all of his nature that was not pure and good. With reverent care he was tending in his heart the seeds of holy purpose and effort, that in days to come, when they had taken root and grown up, he might rest thankfully beneath their shadow. And through all the toil and labor of the lot which had been appointed him, there flowed like some quiet stream, ever refreshing and enriching it, his love for Jeanie Lyneton; that sweet human love, which, almost like God's own, raises and ennobles and purifies wherever it comes.

Now a change had passed over his life. "Good for nothing" was the conclusion which Hugh Deeping wrote on all his fair resolves. He had done his best, and it had failed. He had tried to be good, and the effort had landed him in a worse estate than that from which he had set out. He had worked well, and won nothing but injustice. He had trusted, and been deceived. Life, love, providence, all seemed one great mockery, just an array of hollow words that had no meaning in them. He could but laugh when he thought of his patience, his trust, his hope, wherewith he was to have done so much. And when he looked for pity, there was none; and *for help, it was far from him.*

So, as we have seen, he tried what thoughtless merriment would do. He began to make a fast thing of life, and, as his fellow-clerks said, "went at it" with a perilous eagerness which was certain, sooner or later, to work its own check. For the overtaxed brain will surely turn and demand a heavy price for the work which has been cruelly forced from it; and the man's energies, goaded on either for pleasure or toil, will one day pay back with terrible earnestness every blow which has urged them forward beyond their strength.

Hugh lived at this fiery speed for a month or two, following up his long days of toil at the Bellona works with evenings of roisterous mirth among his fellow-clerks, and a set of like-minded young men to whom they introduced him. And on Saturday afternoons there were hotel dinners, which the six months' salary overpaid by Mr. Lyneton was quite sufficient to meet handsomely; first-rate hotel dinners, where the best of wine was drunk, and the best of jokes made, and the raciest of stories told, and where Hugh was always leader of the fun; none so bright and merry as he. Indeed, his fellow-clerks said it was a shame he had kept himself shut up so for six months, and never let them see what stuff he was made of, and what a jolly companion he could be. No more quiet evening hours in Mrs. Mallinson's sitting-room, with the old Greek and Latin authors for his companions; no more walks home from Lyneton Abbots in the winter starlight, or dusk of early spring, with sweet memories and sweeter hopes thronging round him; no more pauses for thought and reflection, pauses in which, taken apart for a little season from the din and confusion of busy working-life, his soul might speak with God, and in that speech win strength. Indeed, no more thought of any thing now, than how he might forget the past, and hurry madly on through the present.

But this only lasted for a month or two, and then the overstrain began to tell. Those evenings of noisy merriment exacted their payment in days of headache and prostration, followed by nights of sleeplessness or dreams more gruesome than any waking could be. Coming to his work again after nights like these, the long columns of figures would quiver and tremble before his eyes. Sometimes for a few moments his memory failed, the strained cord gave way, and let the thoughts which it had held together fall apart in scattered confusion. Or, writing for an hour together at what he thought was a succinct statement of the number of "pigs" of iron taken in, and the number of boiler plates sent out, he found, on looking it over, that he had been stringing together the merest nonsense, a set of unconnected sentences, the bubbling remnants of some after-dinner story, or wine-inspired jest. And then, with fierce impatience, he would tear up the paper, and long to rush out into the air, over the moors and mountains, any where out of this close, stifling atmosphere, out of reach of this incessant din, this beating of hammers and clanking of iron-shod feet, which seemed sometimes as if it must goad him almost to madness.

Grave warnings these, that he was working too hard both with hand and brain. But Hugh took no heed of them. Only they soured his temper, and put an angry irritability into his manner, and made Mrs. Mallinson think that surely things were going altogether wrong with him. And when one of the members of Grosmont Road Chapel, who also had a son in the Bellona works, called at Canton House, and retailed a few of the remarks which were freely enough circulated among the clerks, touching Mr. Deeping's recklessness and wild goings on, she was quite prepared for the scandal, and determined to keep a sharp lookout over the young man for the future. Perhaps it might be better to give him warning at once, and have him off the premises. When once young men took to giving wine-parties, and having Sunday excursions up the river to the Castle Gardens, there was no knowing how far they might go, nor how inadequate the most liberal salary might be to meet the quarterly payment of rent and extras. Mrs. Mallinson would speak to her husband about it that very night, and she was much obliged to the member of Grosmont Road for telling her in such a friendly way what was said about the young man; though indeed it was no more than she had expected from his manner of conducting himself for some time past. For there had been a marked change in his behavior ever since he gave up going to Lyneton Abbots, and she could not account for it, but it was very strongly impressed on her own mind that things were not quite straight there; some little disagreeableness in the accounts, most likely, which had caused him to be dismissed in such a hurry, Mr. Lyneton not liking to proceed to extremes, for fear of injuring the young man's prospects at the Bellona works. Very kind of him; but she thought that sort of thing might be carried too far, and if matters *had* got wrong, they ought to be looked into, and sifted to the very bottom, and the parties who had made them wrong punished, as a warning to others. At any rate, that was what *she* should feel it her duty to do, under similar circumstances.

Then Mr. Feverige found mistakes in the accounts, and hinted at want of punctuality and accuracy in his once promising young clerk. Hints which Hugh repelled angrily enough, for he was in no mood to bear reproof now. And instead of meekly resolving to amend his ways, he put on Betsy's attitude of indignant defiance, and told his employer that if he was not satisfied he might look out for some one else to fill the post of counting-house clerk, for there were many other offices better than that, open to young men of education and ability. To which Mr. Feverige, with his usual cast-iron immovability, had replied, very well, then he *should* look out for some one else, and Mr. Deeping might consider himself at liberty when his nine months of service expired, on the first of July.

And still those roisterous merry-makings went on, and still the *long* columns of figures kept *dancing and fluttering* before Hugh's eyes, and his memory gave those treacherous, fatal starts, and still he worked on, keeping up a brave face among his fellow-clerks, treating them to hotel dinners, which he enlivened with jest, and song, and story; and after them came sleepless nights, and days of weariness and oppression, until, at last, the tired brain would bear no longer tyranny. Coming home one evening from the works, weak, and thoroughly worn out, the street-lamps dazzling before his eyes, the green and crimson jars in the chemist's window just one confused mass of color, and passing, as usual, through Mr. Mallinson's shop on his way to his own room, he staggered and fell down there.

Drunk! So Mr. Mallinson, who had seen him come home once or twice lately in a very shaky manner, said, as he and the apprentice boy dragged poor Hugh up stairs, and laid him on his bed. He had noticed something not quite right about the young man for some weeks past. He had taken a wrong turning, the provision-dealer said, and would find himself tripped up by and by. It was an awkward thing taking the wrong turning, especially so early in life, for there was no knowing how far it might lead. Mr. Deeping had better have stopped at home in the evenings, and made himself comfortable with Mrs. Mallinson and Sarah Matilda in the back parlor, than come to such a pass as this. Of course Mr. Feverige must be told of it. It would never do for him to be employing a young man in his counting-house who was given to any thing of that sort. It would be no real kindness, either to employer or employed, to cover up such a glaring delinquency, and let him go to his work again just as if nothing had been the matter. Mr. Mallinson would write to Mr. Feverige that very night and inform him of the circumstance. Then, of course, he might do as he liked about taking the young man back again, though Mr. Mallinson knew what he should do if it was his case.

And Mrs. Mallinson, when she came down stairs again, after going into Hugh's room and seeing him lie there, breathing so heavily, with flushed face, too, and red, half-closed eyelids, said the same thing, only she said it with more asperity than her husband.

"A nice thing to take place in a respectable family," she remarked, after a sniff of portentous significance, "and treated with such attention as he's been ever since he came into the house, and the opportunity given him of attending the outward means regular, and identifying himself with the cause, and supporting it at the monthly collections if he had the proper sentiments of a professing person. And a minister's son, too, as he represented himself to be—such audacious wickedness! No, Sarah Matilda, I beg you won't express yourself in that way," continued Mrs. Mallinson, when her daughter, being cast in a somewhat softer mould, put in a mildly deprecatory remark about young men away from home being liable to temptations in a place like Oresbridge. "How often have I impressed upon you that you never ought to look

upon sin with any thing but abhorrence; and I hope you never will, especially when it's committed against light and privilege, as I may say, and the best of examples in the bosom of a respectable family. But I always mistrusted him from the very beginning—yes, from the very beginning; and if it hadn't been for paying the rent regular, which I'll do him the justice to say he always did, and for the way you've been called upon, Mr. Mallinson, to support the cause among us, as I'm sure you've been a stay to it when there was no one else willing to come forward with gold upon the plate when it was a public occasion, I wouldn't have encouraged his being in the family—no, that I wouldn't; and it's a providential escape for you, Sarah Matilda, as I hope you'll be drawn out in thankfulness for, that you've the prospect of being settled with a party as will be a better protection to you, even if he hasn't such a fine voice for joining in with a bass as Mr. Deeping."

Sarah Matilda blushed and said no more. Mr. Reynolds was a very eligible young man, with admirable prospects in the confectionery line, and a much finer talent for making himself agreeable in the back parlor than ever Mr. Deeping possessed.

"Yes, and, with no proper respect for his privileges either," continued Mrs. Mallinson, "asking him down as we did night after night, with a view to his making himself at home with us, and being, as I may say, an addition to the family, which of course it is an addition to a family having any one that's willing to make himself agreeable and join in where there's music going on, or any thing of that sort, instead of shutting himself up there in the front sitting-room, just as if nobody was good enough for him. Fine sort of goodness indeed, and him in the condition he is now, a reproach to his parents, if it *was* the ministry that he was connected with, which I've my doubts upon, and always had from the very beginning,"

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed again more vigorously than ever.

But she and her husband wished it had been only a case of drink, when next morning Hugh Deeping, instead of getting up and going to his work as usual, lay tossing about and moaning so heavily. And still more they wished it so, when the slow hours passed on and that stupor did not clear away, except for the raving of delirium. He was going to have an illness now; that was what he was going to have, Mrs. Mallinson said. He had been overworking himself for the sake of getting more salary, or overdrinking at those wine-parties that Mrs. Grater had told her about, and this was the consequence of it; and they should have all the trouble, which people never seemed to think of when they went and exposed themselves to any thing of that sort. A serious illness, too, most likely; perhaps weeks and months of it. Things that began in that strange way, never passed off like ordinary cases. She *shouldn't wonder a bit if it wasn't going to turn out brain fever.*

In which supposition Mrs. Mallinson was perfectly correct. For when the doctor came next day, he said it *was* a case of brain fever, and a serious case, too. There was no telling how it might end. And if the young man had any friends, they had better be sent for, and the road in the front of the house must be littered with bark, and all noise kept as far away as possible, for his life depended upon quiet. And then he asked about the patient's previous habit of living; had he been much given to exciting amusements, company, drinking, or any thing of that sort?

To which Mrs. Mallinson answered that she could not say for certain, for he was a young man that never made himself at home with them; but he had been a very changed character of late, and had spent all his evenings out somewhere; but where, she could not take upon herself to tell, for she was not a person who cared to speak evil of others, unless she knew it to be correct, and she certainly had seen him the worse for company, and she didn't doubt but what he'd brought the present visitation upon himself in consequence of something of that sort. But she didn't wish to bring forward his failings, though nobody had more reason to complain of them than herself, only he was a very changed character, a very changed character indeed, within the last few weeks.

And Mrs. Mallinson said that with an accent which spoke volumes.

The doctor shook his head, and said there was but small chance for the young man if his previous life had been of such a nature as to quicken the natural activity of the brain; together with a great many more observations, which Mrs. Mallinson, not being versed in medical science, could not very well understand. Only she gathered from them that Mr. Deeping's illness was likely to be a very troublesome one, requiring much care and attention, and that it had been aggravated by his previous mode of life, if not entirely induced by it; and that his mother was to be sent for, because he would need very much more watching than Mrs. Mallinson, with all her household duties, could possibly give him.

So there poor Hugh lies, helplessly enough, and there we may leave him to struggle as best he can through the miserable tangle into which Rose Beresford's foolish talk and Lyneton Abbots pride and his own folly have brought him. Mrs. Mallinson frets and fumes, and talks much about getting him removed across the road to Mrs. Green's, for she can't do with illness in the house; it is a thing she has never been accustomed to, and it fidgets her sadly. She can't see any danger in wrapping him well up in plenty of blankets, and having him carried across on a mattress to the meek-faced widow, who would be glad enough to wait upon him for a consideration, and give him as much attention as even the most exacting of invalids could demand. But the doctor is very firm, and says it would be nothing short of murder to

remove him in his present condition, so Mrs. Mallinson has to submit. And Sarah Matilda does not care very much to wait upon him, for Mr. Reynolds is delightfully assiduous in his attentions after business hours, and she likes better to chat with him in the back parlor than to bathe Hugh Deeping's hot forehead, or cool his parched lips with drops of water.

So he lies there day after day, and before the week is over his mother comes to nurse him. Which she does with sad, patient tenderness, praying through many a midnight vigil, that God would be merciful to her boy, and raise him up again that he may repent of the error of his ways. For Mrs. Mallinson had not failed to tell her of the young man's reckless life, and how she and her husband have been greatly exercised on account of his viciousness and irregularity. No money, Mrs. Mallinson says, could ever recompense her and her husband for the anxiety they have had about him. Indeed, the doctor says the present affliction is quite brought on by his own willfullness; providential, as Mrs. Mallinson thinks, and as she hopes the young man will think so, too, if he should be raised up again, which is very unlikely, though she wouldn't have Mrs. Deeping distress herself about that, because whatever happens is sure to be for the best. It isn't for us poor weak creatures, says she, to decide who shall live and who shall die, and if Providence has arranged that he shall be taken, there will be a way made for Mrs. Deeping to bear it.

But Hugh knows nothing of this. He lies there, sometimes still and quiet enough, sometimes raving so wildly that his poor mother can not hold him, but has to send for Mr. Mallinson and the apprentice boy to help her. And Mr. Feverige, learning that he is in a very precarious state, engages another clerk, not without some little regret, for the young man has done his work very well until the last few weeks, has been a most efficient "hand" in the counting-house. And the prudent haberdasher dies, leaving his brother's children five hundred pounds each, to be paid down when Mary Deeping comes of age next summer. And Martin Allington goes very often to that stately old house in Eaton Square; but Miss Hildegarde Lyneton regrets to say that Jeanie does not behave to him in such a way as to encourage much hope of a prosperous termination of his suit. Which untoward conduct of Jeanie's causes her aunt Gwendoline some little uneasiness, an uneasiness which might deepen into actual anxiety, but that another cloud is creeping slowly, surely toward the old house at Lyneton Abbots; a cloud which by and by will not let her see much beyond it.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Maurice Demeron came home sooner than he expected, *in consequence of some changes in the company to which he belonged.* Early in the year, just after he had written to his friends to tell them that he expected to come home about August or September, he got leave of absence for six months, with instructions that he was to start at once. It was of no use writing home again, as in that case he and his letter would reach England together; so without any further notice he left Bombay, intending to take the overland route, and get home sometime in March.

Which he did, as we have already seen, and was on his way down to Lyneton Abbots, while poor Hugh Deeping, hot and angry enough, was laying out for himself a new scheme of life, sweeping away the old landmarks, and hurrying forward in a wild, reckless course which should ere long work its own bitter, painful cure.

That Maurice Demeron, nearing the home of Gwendoline Lyneton after an absence of nearly six years, nearing it too with such memories and such hopes, could have been completely absorbed in the leading article of the *Times*, able and vigorous though that leading article undoubtedly was, might prove him to be a man of not very intense feeling. Or that perfect ease and composure of manner might cover a depth of abiding steadfastness, which, being so changeless, could well be calm too. Gwendoline Lyneton herself, under those same circumstances, would have been just as quiet. Not a quiver of restlessness or agitation would have had leave to break the girded peace of her grave, pale face. No stranger would have intermeddled with her joy; and if a touch of anxiety had marred it, that too would have been as proudly hidden. For what had strangers to do with that supreme moment of her life?—and why should word or sign of hers invite them to pry curiously into that coming future which was so grand and sacred?

Yet Maurice Demeron's composure was scarcely that of intense and controlled emotion. His face was not the face of a man whose strongest hope or passion lies too deep for outward show. It told rather of a sensitive and mobile nature, one that would feel keenly, but not very deeply; a nature not strong enough for impulse, swayed instead by the lighter breeze of fancy. He was evidently a gentleman, in the highest social sense of the word. His accent and all the trifling belongings of his travelling-costume, bore abundant witness to that fact, even if his finely-chiselled features and a certain easy grace of mien and gesture had not told their own story of gentle breeding. Centuries of careful culture had been at work to mould that graceful contour, That lordly bearing, so independent and yet so infinitely courteous, was the splendid flower which only blooms on an old ancestral stock; which no amount of careful training and fostering can produce from the thin soil of modern gentility, or cause to spring forth even from the granite rock of self-made respectability. That fine, lofty ease of manner, that indescribable courtliness of mien, had come to Maurice Demeron through a whole long line of pure descent,

and it could have come to him in no other way. If a true spirit, a faithful, noble, lofty soul could likewise so descend, if a man could take his ancestors' strength of purpose and fineness of nature along with their physical endowments, then Major Demeron might have a splendid heritage.

After awhile he laid down his paper, and changed his seat into the corner of the carriage, not that he might be further away from the careless chat of his travelling companions, but that he might better note the distinctive features of the landscape through which they were passing. They had reached the famous iron district now, which people came from far and near to see. Upon the gathering darkness of the night, scarcely broken as yet by the glimmer of the rising moon, the flames from many a seething furnace tossed forth their fiery spray, dimly lighting up huge sheds, in which half-clad men were flitting to and fro like imps in some pandemonium, dragging after them long wriggling bars of red-hot iron. And far off in the dim, vapory gloom, other imps could be seen standing before the huge puddling-furnaces, heaving into them masses of unpurified ore, which, with no very great stretch of imagination, one might conceive to be human beings re-acting the terrible tragedy of Nebuchadnezzar. And even beyond the noise of the London express, clearing its way with shriek and whistle past undermined houses and ruins of broken-down cottages and shafts of coal-pits, could be heard the heavy beat of those great hammers, the roar of flames from the furnace-mouths, the tramp of sandalled feet upon the echoing floors.

It was no new sight to Maurice Demeron. Just so angrily those huge furnaces had spouted out their blazing surf five years ago, when he took the night-mail to London, after saying good-bye to Gwendoline Lyneton under the stone gate-way of Lyneton Abbots. With just such spirit-like rapidity those black shadowy figures had darted hither and thither in the warm gloom of the summer twilight, only the tread of their iron-clad feet telling that they were no spirits, but toiling men—men of the same passions with himself, separated from him only by a less noble parentage, and perhaps a less spotless life.

But then Maurice Demeron's thoughts were sad. His heart was heavy with pain of parting. A long, weary stretch of years lay before him, with only Gwendoline's truth to brighten it. He had neither name, nor fame, nor right to claim for his own that which he had already won. He must needs wait until he had proved himself worthy. He must needs earn for himself a place in the world. And not until he had earned that, and perhaps lost in earning it some of the young glow and freshness which makes life so sweet, might he stretch forth his hand and take the prize. Five years! It *seemed so long to wait*, and yet for the joy that *was set before him he thought* he could wait so *patiently*.

Now the toil was over, right earned to claim his own. Perhaps, also, some of the freshness gone, which seldom stays beyond those first sweet years of youth. A long experience of life among his fellow-officers in mess-rooms and barracks, and of gayety among the upper-class society of the Bombay Presidency, had worn away many of those longing, lingering thoughts with which at first he used to turn toward the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Not all of them, though. Those five years of hard work, which, besides introducing him to Indian gayety, and giving him glimpses of fast life in the mess-room, had made a man of him, and got him to a first-class position in the service, had not taken away the sweet memory of Gwendoline Lyneton, or shaken, except now and then, the love he had for her. True, there had been one or two little flirtations, trifling episodes of love-making, more for the sake of passing time than any thing else, which had never found their way into his home letters. Sometimes he had chafed against the tie which bound so slightly, and yet so strongly by that very slightness. But on the whole, Maurice Demeron had kept his trust very honorably—more honorably than many men would have kept it.

And now he was coming to Lyneton Abbots again. He was going to take up the old life just where he left it five years ago. He was going to hold in his own again that hand, which had been so truly given him there. He would look upon that calm, beautiful face once more. How well he remembered it!—how faithfully its impress had stayed upon his heart through all those years, always shining out again, gentle as ever, when the passing clouds had cleared away, and the shadowy image of some other beauty, which overlaid it just for a little season, had faded. Gwendoline's face, so fair and perfect, so rounded with the soft curves of youth, a tint of rose flushing its clear paleness sometimes, such a bright, hopeful light shining out from beneath the shadow of those pencilled brows. It was a beautiful face. He had seen none so beautiful in all their long years of parting.

Slowly the London express trailed its winding length of carriages into the Oresbridge station. No one was there to meet Maurice Demeron. None of his friends knew as yet that he had even set sail for England. Gathering up his railway-rug and valise, he jumped into a fly, and was soon rattling along the quiet Lyneton Abbots road, whose gnarled oak-trees, gleaming now in the March moonlight, had bent over him with all their wealth of summer greenery, when, a stripling, downcast and sad-hearted, he had last trodden that road.

When he reached the village he dismissed the man, for he wanted to reach the Manor House unnoticed. He could do that easily enough. Now, at ten o'clock in the evening, scarce a footfall was to be heard in the quiet little spot. Even the lights in the upper windows were extinguished, except in the lawyer's and doctor's houses, for the inhabitants of Lyne-

ton Abbots observed the old adage, "Early to bed and early to rise," with a pious exactitude, which made them, if not remarkably wealthy, at least healthy and wise to a most enviable extent. Indeed, both the lawyer and doctor might perhaps have welcomed a change for the worse in the habits of the village people, since their almost primitive condition of health sadly cramped Mr. Lucombe's practice, and their wisdom confined Mr. Jacques's professional engagements entirely to the more quarrelsome inhabitants of the neighboring town of Oresbridge.

Crossing the village green, and going through the church-yard, whose yew-trees cast such a black shadow now upon the gleaming gravestones, Maurice Demeron reached the bridle-path, and stood once more within the griffin-guarded stone gate-way, where, five years ago, Gwendoline Lyneton had said good-bye to him.

There was a leafy rustle in the elm-trees then, a scent of roses and clove-pinks from the overgrown flower-beds; the soft July wind stirring among the sweet-brier, made it send out many a waft of perfume, and the white acacia-blossoms fluttered silently down one by one, and strewed the grass around that old sun-dial. Now those elm-trees only showed thousands of tiny buds, close folded up against the frosty winds, and here and there a pale primrose struggled up on the sheltered bed by the vine-wall, and the sweet-brier gave neither perfume nor rosy falling blossom to any breeze that stirred it. But not a change had passed over the old mansion. Grayly as ever those balustrades stretched along the terrace-walk, with here and there a tuft of moss within their iron mouldings. The ivy seemed neither to have grown nor trailed over the tall gables, beneath which the latticed window now caught the moonlight in many a pearly flicker. And the old Abbot over the doorway, with cowled brow and girded robe, looked down gravely as ever, telling no tales of any thing that he might see when evening dusk had crept up over the quiet garden. Cautious old Abbot Siward. It was not he who told of Hugh Deeping and Jeanie, standing so near him. They might have looked into each other's faces long enough before any word of his would have disturbed them. Perhaps, by and by, another couple might stand where they had stood, hand in hand too, and still he would be just as silent.

Gwendoline Lyneton's home. She was there now, in that oriel-room perhaps—Maurice remembered it well—through whose crimson curtains such a warm glow was pouring out into the garden. Perhaps her footstep was the last that trod where he stood now. Perhaps that rusty old gate had not been opened since she passed through it, stately, beautiful, as he remembered her of old.

For Gwendoline used to be so beautiful. Again he recalled her, just as she was when they rambled among the flower-beds so long ago; her light step, her *graceful yet lofty* bearing, her *look, very proud and fearless*, save when it met his—and then so changed! The picture was very dear still. Those five years had not dimmed it. And he was so near her now! Almost a step would bring him to her again.

But he would not take that step just yet. He would linger for a little while in the old garden, thinking over again the memories that belonged to it. His courage almost failed him now that the meeting was so near. He felt a strange shrinking even from that very joy toward which he had been reaching so long. Not that he feared her look would be less trustful now; not that he feared any change had come over her in all those years. She would be faithful enough to what he had given her, he knew that full well. But he wanted to bring himself nearer in thought and feeling to the past time, before he actually came face to face with it again. He wanted to feel more vividly than he felt it just now, that he was really the same Maurice Demeron who had stood in that old gate-way beneath the rustling July leaves, and said—

"We can trust each other, Greta."

Because, after all, five years was a long time, and an effort seemed needed to bring back just the old emotion—the sweet, tender longing with which, when a youth of three-and-twenty, he used to wander with Gwendoline through the Lyneton Abbots garden. And perhaps he need not be surprised if the effort when made did not quite bring back the old emotion. For he was so very young then, and young people are more quickly brought under the influence of any kind of feeling. It was scarcely to be expected that at eight-and-twenty he could have all the freshness and eagerness of a youth. Some allowance must certainly be made for those years of toil and experience, and he need not surely chide himself so very much if, standing on the ground that Gwendoline Lyneton trod, and looking upon the home which even now sheltered her, he was conscious of no very rapturous thrill; nay, if even it needed a long process of thought to bring back any thing like the emotion which had once stirred him so profoundly.

So he lingered yet in the shadow of the moonlight. Presently he heard music—the sound of a sweet, rich voice. Was it Gwendoline's voice? She used to sing to him in those long-ago days. He would go nearer and listen. It might be one of the old songs which he loved so well, and listening to it would recall the old sweetness.

He knew the house well enough, with all its quaint twists and turns. There was a side window in that oriel-room, opening into another part of the garden; a very small window, tangled round with ivy; left uncurtained sometimes, for it only looked out into a quiet recess where no one ever came. He had gone in at that window sometimes, when Gwendoline was alone with her work in the oriel-room—gone in very silently, and watched her when she never knew he was near. It would be pleasant to do so again; at least to stand by it and see the singer as he listened to the song.

So he stole quietly round to the little case-

ment, and there through the clasping ivy branches he saw Gwendoline Lyneton sitting by the fire, her cheek resting on her hand, those braids of pale yellow hair folded round a face which was as sweet—

Nay, *was* it quite so sweet as when he remembered it five years ago?

CHAPTER XL.

For Gwendoline was thinking of the letter, Hugh's letter, which Miss Hildegarde Lyneton had very prudently sent down that morning from Eaton Square, and which the liveried Lyneton Abbots footman had just taken to the provision-dealer's shop in Grosmont Road.

That letter was not likely to produce very pleasant thoughts in her mind. The writer of it, not content with loitering about uninvited in the garden of Lyneton Abbots, seeking stolen interviews with Jeanie, while all the time he was pledged to some one in his own station of life, had followed her with his dishonorable attentions even to Aunt Hildegarde's home in London, whither she had gone on purpose to be free from those attentions. He had presumed to write to her; he, the low-born counting-house clerk, who, even if his intentions had been honest and manly, might have had natural instinct enough to have known that they were completely out of place when thrust upon one whose position was so infinitely beyond his own. But they were not honest and manly. He was playing a double game. He was daring to amuse himself at the expense of another's happiness; and that other one of their own Lyneton line. And any one who dared so to amuse himself would bitterly repent it.

Scorn and contempt were written plainly enough in her face as she pondered such thoughts as these. Pride, too; not the grand unconscious Lyneton pride, which brooded so finely over those pale features sometimes, but angry, vexed pride, tightening the level brows, and bending the red lips into lines that had no sweetness in them any more, only firm resolve and conquering will. That he, obscurely born and lowly bred, should dare to mate with one of her line; should dare to dream of touching, save with humble respect, a hand in whose blue veins the blood of a long, noble race of ancestry flowed unmixed and pure! And to dare to touch it, too, for simple selfishness and mockery! Was this, then, what came of courtesy to those so far beneath them? Was this the way in which he would repay that kindness, which, stooping so low to reach out a helping hand to him, had only lifted him to a position in which he could presume upon it by insult and deceit.

All the indignation of the old Lynetons glowed in Gwendoline's heart as she thought of Hugh Deeping, now for the first time showed to *her in his true colors. Its calm, placid restfulness was swept away by scorn* for one who could act so basely. Those great, quiet gray eyes shone with a light of wounded pride, and over her face, so still at times, and almost meek in its quiet peace, there gathered a look of angry contempt for one who could so basely wrong the kindness given him from those who pitied his loneliness, and would fain have helped it away if they could.

That was not the face which had been in Maurice Demeron's thoughts for five years; that was not the face which had brought back his truant heart again and again when some Southern beauty had beguiled it for a time, and almost won forgetfulness of those parting words—

"We can *trust* each other, Greta."

The eyes that he remembered so well were always kind and loving. He had seen them light up sometimes with pride, but never with contempt. The lips which had moved in answer to his farewell five years ago, seemed only made for smiles, not for the curl of scorn which marred them now. And then for the first time there came into Maurice Demeron's heart a vague feeling of regret for the promise which had bound him through all those years. He had often doubted. He had often swerved from his allegiance to this, the first and worthiest queen of his heart; but the doubts had always passed away, and the allegiance, given to another for a little season, had been given back again more faithfully than before. Now, with no distance between them to make room for doubt, and with no other sweet face at hand to win from him the homage which was already claimed, there came instead a half-acknowledged shrinking from the unspoken promise, and then, more fatal still, a feeling of relief that it *was* unspoken.

Still he lingered in that little ivied recess by the window, looking into the oriel-room, every nook and corner of which was so familiar to him; listening to the voice which still kept singing on in rich, sweet tones, sometimes snatches of Italian music, sometimes a merry lilting-tune, sometimes a simple English ballad, such as Gwendoline used to sing to him six years ago, but such as she could scarcely sing now, if that moody expression always brooded upon her pale, marble-like face.

The singer he could not see. The piano had been removed from its accustomed place. As he stood there hiding by the ivy branches, he could only distinguish Gwendoline sitting by the table, with cheek resting on her hand, Mr. Lyneton in his accustomed seat by the fire, in just the old position, with the old fold of the finely-moulded hands, and the old bend of the stately head, silvered now with age as well as sadness.

Jeanie Lyneton must be singing, then. Little Jeanie, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed Jeanie, who used to romp with him in the garden, and coax him to swing her when old Grey was too busy, and give him kisses in return for sugar-plums and *bon-bons*, and climb on his knee to listen to fairy-tales. Jeanie must be eighteen now, nearly as old as Gwendoline was when he went away. Just eighteen, and he was a man of eight-and-

twenty. Well, that was not so very old. A man at eight-and-twenty was in the very prime and glory of his strength.

Then followed a long pause of thought, while Maurice Demeron leaned back in that little ivied recess. And still those rich tones kept pouring forth, sometimes merry, sometimes passionate. It must be a sweet soul that sang through so sweet a voice. Was Jeanie's face as beautiful as her voice? Had those years given to her what they had taken from Miss Lyneton? She used to be a bright, merry little creature, full of fun and liveliness, with no very great promise of beauty, but very warm-hearted and affectionate; much more impulsive than her young aunt, with little of the Lyneton pride and self-control about her. But then, when Gwendoline *did* smile upon him she looked so gloriously beautiful. When those calm, gray eyes of hers lighted up, as they could light up sometimes, with passion or enthusiasm, and the statue-like beauty of her features glowed for a moment or two into rosy life, she was such a splendid creature. What a pity her face should have cooled down so!—that she should have taken on that look of calm resistance in place of the gentle, placid, yet lofty sweetness of the old time. What a pity that women should ever lose the glow and glory of those years when girlhood is quivering into womanhood, and the sweet dawn and freshness of the morning-time is warmed by the golden beauty of the coming noon. He wished Gwendoline could have stayed just where he left her five years ago; where Jeanie was now.

Maurice Demeron sauntered round to the front of the house again. He wanted a little more time for preparation. He could not quite brace himself up to that meeting. He did not quite know how he should get over it. He could scarcely believe, even yet, that he was the same Maurice Demeron who had stood under the old stone griffins that warm dusky July night, and whispered those words about trusting each other.

But it was scarcely gentlemanly to be prowling about in Mr. Lyneton's garden at that time of night, playing the listener in that secret, unobserved manner. It did not look honorable, and Maurice Demeron, brave officer as he was, would not have done a dishonorable thing for the world. He must go in and make himself known, and get over the first awkwardness of meeting.

The gray-haired serving-man, who had performed the same kind office for Hugh Deeping a few days before, showed Mr. Demeron into the library, and then went to tell Miss Lyneton that a gentleman, who declined giving his name, wished to speak with her there.

Was it Hugh Deeping, the counting-house clerk, intruding himself again with some explanation or apology about the letter which would have reached him by this time? And had he charged the servant not to give his name, because remembering the reception he had met with on the previous Saturday, he thought, correctly enough, too, that the announcement of it would secure his instant *and unceremonious* dismissal? And why should he seek an interview with her instead of offering any craven apology which he might have to make to her brother, who was certainly the most suitable person to receive it?

With a very queenly step, and a face not brightened by any cordial welcome for the visitor she expected to meet, Miss Lyneton entered the library.

Certainly not to find Hugh Deeping, with his student-like abstraction of manner, and somewhat unconventional garb, which nevertheless could not quite hide the true gentlemanhood of him. This stranger, though on travel, as she saw at once, from the rug and valise which lay on the floor beside him, had the bearing and aspect of quite a different class of society from that to which Mr. Deeping belonged. He had the easy, self-possessed manner of a person accustomed to rule and to be obeyed, together with the graceful courtesy due from stranger to stranger everywhere. But the bearded face and the darkened skin and the added portliness which five years of foreign life had given him, quite hid from her recognition the slight, fair-haired Maurice Demeron of her girlhood, the brave soldier-laddie, to whom, after it had long been sought, she had given her trust, and would hold it, as the Lynetons always did, even unto death.

The look of scorn with which she had entered the room gave place to one of courteous inquiry, and that again to reserved surprise, as this stranger, with never a word of greeting or introduction, kept his place there by her brother's empty chair, leaning his arm on the mantle-piece, looking so quietly down upon her; yes, even down upon Gwendoline Lyneton; for he was of Saul-like stature, this sunburnt soldier from the far East, this man who could command a troop, and lead them fearlessly to battle, to danger and death, if need be, but could not command his own heart to be true, could not hold that faithful to the trust which he had once taken, and promised to keep forever.

Yet, as she looked at him, the truth slowly dawned upon her. A glint of the old smile gradually sunning over his face, the smile she remembered so well, something in look and manner kept still through all these years told her at last that Maurice Demeron had indeed come back. Come back to say all that had been left unsaid between them—come back to end that bitter waiting and suspense. The future had glided into the past now. There would be no more weariness and anxiety. Maurice had come home! And the full-hearted quietness of her content only those can know who have loved so long and trusted so faithfully as Gwendoline Lyneton had.

It was all there in her heart—the love which would have given him so warm a greeting; which would fain have rested itself, weary with so long parting, in the shelter of his, and been at peace forever. Then the light would have come back to her eyes, and the flush of hope to her cheek, and all the pride and scorn would have died away which sometimes brooded now upon her

face. And loving and beloved, she would have won more than the glorious beauty of her youth again, because upon it there would have shone the crown of tried and noble womanhood. Seeing her thus, Maurice Demeron's weak heart would have taken strength again. His wavering faith would have steadied itself. She might still have been his queen—his only one. And, each remembering the other in the far-off sunny years of youth-time, and each having that sweet memory of early love to bind them closer together, they might have gone the rest of their way hand in hand; her stronger soul staying his by its calm steadfastness which never failed; his sunnier nature warming and cherishing hers, so silent and reserved. Each giving what the other lacked, though giving as man and woman seldom give, she the strength, he the sunshine, their lives would have made sweet music at last, and they need never have repented those long years of trust and waiting.

But the Lyneton people were so quiet and self-controlled. It was not their way to let the strong tenderness within them speak out in over-joyful word or look. It was all there, but quietly there and forever there. Those brave knights and ladies fair, sleeping so calmly now under their stone canopies in St. Hilda's Church, with folded hands and fast-shut eyes, had never spoken greatly of their love. They had held it fast through doubt and danger and fear. They had been true to it, when to be true needed warfare sharper than sword or spear could wage. They had suffered for it, fought for it—some of them—died for it; but they had never spoken greatly of it.

Neither would Gwendoline Lyneton. Though, like May flowers when there comes a sudden burst of sunshine after rain, her whole soul glowed and glistened with the sudden joy his coming back had brought, she could find no words to tell him so. Nor, had they come, would she have been quick to speak them. That she had waited so long and so patiently, that through all those years no thought untrue to him had been bidden to tarry in her heart, told more than any joyous overflow of words all that she had to give him. And so, when she knew that it was indeed Maurice Demeron, she only went up to him, and taking both his hands in hers, said—

"I am very, *very* glad you have come home again."

He might have heard the rich tumult of her voice, which even Lyneton pride could not wholly calm. He might have read the sweet content which had already smoothed out the scornful lines from her face, and made it grand with the beauty of hope fulfilled. He might surely have told from the trembling clasp of her hands that it was only outward quietness, that far away down beneath it all there stirred the true heart's gladness, only so still because it could not speak.

But Maurice Demeron wanted other greeting *than that. He wanted* an April shower of tears and smiles. He wanted words and caresses, and the joyous flowing forth of affection that sought no restraint. He could not read that finer language which the true soul speaks in its very silence, where words are idle, and tears and smiles alike vain to tell its vast content. He wanted some passionate outbreak, which should float them both over the vexing shoals of reserve and uncertainty. He had so often pictured this meeting, and pictured it so differently. There was a commonplaceness about it which jarred upon him, how or why he could not tell.

And then again that vague feeling of regret came over him, mingled, as before, with the other and more fatal feeling of relief that Gwendoline did not seem to take for granted what he more than ever doubted his willingness to remind her of.

Too cold, too reserved, too silent, she would never content him now, he thought. Better, perhaps, that the hands so long unclasped should never clasp again, except in friendly greeting. Better the trust of which they had both spoken five years ago, should be the trust of pleasant friendship—nothing more than that.

CHAPTER XLI.

"SHALL we go, then, to Mr. Lyneton? I suppose he will be very much surprised too."

It was Maurice Demeron who said that, when he and Gwendline had not been standing so very long in the old wainscoted library, where Hugh Deeping and Jeanie met for the first time six months ago. The words fell with a sort of chill upon her ear, like the first drops of a thunder-shower, while the sky is still blue and clear. But she said, quietly enough—

"Yes, we will go. Graham will indeed be very much surprised, for we none of us expected that you would leave Bombay until the summer. You have so much to tell us, too."

"And so have you, Greta. Five years is a long time."

It is, indeed, for those who have to pass it in the dim cloud-land of uncertainty. And it had written its story in Gwendoline's face, taking away the girlish freshness which Maurice Demeron loved so well, to put there instead the quiet steadfastness of the woman, which he did not love so well, because it told of a nature with whose faithfulness he could not measure his, and before whose truth his own must needs fail.

So they went, both of them, into the oriel-room, where Mr. Lyneton sat reading by the fire, and Rose Beresford was singing one of those plaintive Irish songs of hers, putting into it so much tenderness, such a great deep of truth and beauty, one might have thought, to hear her sing it, that her heart was as full of feeling as her words.

"Graham, you will be surprised to see Mr. Demeron. He has come back sooner than he

expected. He only landed yesterday, and he has come to see us on his way North."

Then the other and rather more formal ceremony took place of introducing the soldier-stranger to Miss Beresford.

But Rose, with genuine Irish frankness, made no ceremony of it. She had none of the Lyneton staidness and reserve about her. She did indeed return Mr. Demeron's courteous bow with one of exceeding grace and elegance, but there was little of the icy chill of aristocratic composure about her as she said—

"Ah! I know your name very well. I have so often heard Jeanie speak about you. You used to swing her in the garden, and give her *bon-bons* when she was a very little girl."

There was an arch playfulness in Rose's face, and a sparkling brightness in her eyes, contrasted with which Gwendoline Lyneton's pale composure seemed like the frosty perfection of a steel engraving set against the rich glow and color of a tinted lithograph. Major Demeron liked that pleasant freedom of hers. She reminded him of some of the young ladies he had met in India, so different to the high-born English maidens, who seemed to brood so defiantly, like the mountain eagle on his crag, from that Norman altitude of theirs. He felt himself drawn to her at once, as, indeed, most people did who came within the reach of that fascinating influence. Unless some secret spring of discontent or anxiety kept them from yielding to the magic of her power, Rose Beresford seemed to exert that spell over every one around her which May exerts over the flowers. They seemed brighter and happier when she was there, and when she went away it seemed as though the sunshine had gone too.

And in the presence of this stranger, this brave soldier-gentleman from the far East, Rose's powers of fascination seemed to increase. She dearly loved admiration, and unconsciously, when she felt that she was exciting it, her eyes would sparkle, and her face glow with a richer beauty. And there was a sort of innate coquetry about her, not open enough to displease, only just giving piquancy to all her ways when those came in her way whom she could conquer or impress. Not that she ever meant mischief any more than when she was drawn out to imitate the little peculiarities of people that she happened to meet. It was just a sort of instinct in her. She could not help it, and she was scarcely more to be blamed for it than the humming-bird is to be blamed for flashing its gay plumage in the sun, or the sea-anemones for unfolding with tempting curve and swell their many-colored translucent petals.

"And where is Jeanie?" asked Maurice Demeron, when the first surprised greetings were over, and the little party were all seated round the fire, just as they might have been seated had Hugh Deeping, and not this sunburnt stranger from India, been the guest. "Did I not hear her voice just now, as I came up the *garden?*"

"Jeanie is not at home now," said Gwendoline, and a little touch of coldness might have been heard in her accents. "She is staying in London with Aunt Hildegarde, and we do not expect her home again for some time; so Miss Beresford has been kind enough to promise to stay with me until she returns."

Maurice turned with a bow of playful gallantry to Rose, whose bright eyes looked brighter than ever to-night for the passing excitement of the stranger's presence.

"Then you were the songstress to whom I listened outside in the moonlight? You must pardon me, Miss Beresford, for acting such a dishonorable part, but we poor fellows abroad do not have the opportunity of hearing any thing so charming. Barrack life out in Bombay is a dull portion, I can assure you, for any one who has much taste for the concord of sweet sounds."

It might be so, perhaps it was, but Major Demeron did not appear to have suffered very seriously from the dullness of the portion which had been assigned to him. Those five years had passed more lightly over him than they had passed over Gwendoline. Indeed, Maurice Demeron was a man upon whom nothing would lie with very crushing weight. Be his position what it might, he would contrive to get something pleasant out of it. There was a fine elasticity about him, which might bend for a time, but would not easily give way. Maurice had found it a useful quality while knocking about in India. He would find it no less so in England.

He wanted Rose to sing to them again, but, with that exquisite tact which characterized her, she declined. Fond as she was of being the centre of attraction, natural as that position was to her, she felt it would be uncourteous to Mr. and Miss Lyneton, if on this, the first night of Major Demeron's return after five years of absence, when both he and they must have so much to talk of, she was to draw his attention exclusively upon herself. With as much grace as though she had been granting a favor, instead of declining it, she put aside his proposal that she should repeat the little song to which he had listened an hour or two before, while standing in that ivied recess outside the uncurtained window. And with a playful remonstrance against being compelled to do double duty, she turned the conversation aside to Major Demeron's Indian life, and listened with interest more animated and certainly more vividly expressed than Gwendoline's to his stories of peril and adventure: of tiger-hunts and hair-breadth escapes from wild beasts in the jungle: of expeditions across untracked plains and up rocky mountains, and along rivers whose rugged banks, fringed with such glorious tropic foliage, no European eye had ever looked upon before. And then he told them of gorgeous heathen processions, of white-robed Brahmins chanting the worship of their gods in vast temples, before which the statelicst

that English hands ever reared seemed only as children's toys. For he had travelled far and seen much of life, and his was a mind that quickly took in new impressions, and could as readily give them to others. A most entertaining companion, as Rose thought to herself, so brilliant and intelligent; strange contrast, indeed, to the very flat society among which they moved in that stupid little country town of Grantford, elderly ladies, who seemed to have remembered nothing of their past life but its troubles, and valetudinarians, whose whole talk was of vapor baths and new modes of treatment for nervous affections. It was a most successful move, Rose thought, that coming to the county ball, involving as it did this visit to Lyneton Abbots, which promised so much interest and excitement.

And as they sat by the fire listening to these strange stories of foreign travel until the small morning hours crept unawares upon them, Maurice Demeron could scarcely tell whether it was to Miss Lyneton or to Rose that he looked for answering glance of pride and triumph in all his perils overpast. He did know though whose smile was the brightest, and who seemed most breathless with eager excitement to hear how he conquered all and came home safe again.

The gray dawn of twilight had almost risen when Gwendoline sat once more in her own room, looking over those letters which she would not need to cherish any more, for the actual reality of which they had been but the feeble type, was hers now.

Maurice Demeron had come home again. That which had been a hope so long, was now a memory. Last night she had thought of him as far off across the sea, parted from her by a distance which it would take many weeks to traverse. To-night she had clasped his hand, and listened to his voice, and looked full steadily into his face; changed, yet keeping still a dim, pleasant remembrance of that which had looked down upon her five years ago, in the dusky July twilight. He had said before he went away, that when he came back nothing need part them any more. He had come back. And yet—and yet.

For there was no deep fullness of content within her now. That upspringing burst of joy, held so tightly down, lest he, seeing it, should chide her in his heart for too eager gladness at his return, had never come again. Was he changed? She could not tell. Had she changed to him? Never, no Lyneton had ever done that yet. They lived faithfully and they loved truly; so had she.

Then why was she not content? Why did she think upon the almost dream-like past of these few hours with a tinge of sadness? It would all be right. She had never doubted, she had never wavered. All those years she had been true to him.

> *"True as the dial to the sun,*
> *Although it be not shone upon."*

Not once had she swerved from her trust, or given to others, even in thought, that which belonged to Maurice Demeron alone. And the same measure she had meted to others should be meted to her again. She would wait patiently, and all would be well. For it was only this great light, which, coming so suddenly, had dazzled her with its brightness. Out of the gloom she had come too quickly into the sunshine; was it strange, then, that all should seem so dim and indistinct?

The same measure which she had meted to others, should be meted to her again. And poor Hugh Deeping's feet were stumbling on the dark mountains now, and the light that was in him had become darkness. And many a day of reckless folly would have to be lived by him, and many a bitter lesson learned, and many a tear shed for him by those who loved him, lowly-born as he was, and many a stinging memory rooted in his heart, never to be plucked thence again before he would come out into the light, and walk once more in a plain path. All through pride of hers; all because the proud Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots had determined that never one of their line should join hand with any of less noble name, or less lofty descent.

Gwendoline never thought of that when she meted out her deservings for all those years of truth.

CHAPTER XLII.

After that followed a very brilliant week for Lyneton Abbots. Brilliant at least so far as much sweet music and merry chat and many a ramble through the budding woods, and many a tale of Eastern adventure and daring told by Maurice Demeron, could make it brilliant. But for Miss Lyneton that week passed in a slow, sad weariness, which she was too proud to own to herself, far less to betray to others, save in a certain coldness and reserve, which made Rose Beresford's winning playfulness and arch, merry ways seem more fascinating by contrast.

It had been hard to trust, sometimes, when the deep sea lay between them, and when, for many a long month, no word of remembrance came to tell that the past was held by Maurice Demeron as sacredly as Gwendoline kept it in her own heart. But it was harder still to trust, now that no distance parted them save that which was slowly growing wider and wider day by day; a distance more hopeless than any which land or sea can make between those whose faith is fast.

She rarely saw Maurice Demeron alone. Rose was always with them, bright, merry, nonsense-loving Rose, the warm sweetness of whose smile no coldness or reserve ever chilled. Rose, who never turned away with grave, quiet face, when Major Demeron's glance sought hers, but gave it back with sparkling frankness, so different from Gwendoline's half-questioning look. And in those quiet March evenings, when Mr.

Lyneton was busy in the library—for he had his own affairs to manage now that Hugh was sent away, and hard work he found it sometimes—in those quiet March evenings, when, had not Rose been a guest in the house, Miss Lyneton and Maurice Demeron might perhaps have been talking of the past, and strengthening by remembrance of it the links which bound them together, Rose would amuse them by her perpetual overflow of humor and merriment, her laughable imitations of odd people, the valetudinarians of Grantford, who were always talking about their nerves, and discussing vapor baths; or the elderly widow ladies, who call life a vale of tears, and yet were so very fond of card-parties, and all the small gayeties that could be got together in that dullest of dull towns. Or she would sing the simple ballads of her own country in such a sweet, tender voice, that Major Demeron could but leave Gwendoline's side to listen.

It was easy to do that now. For Gwendoline had become so very silent and reserved. She never, of her own accord, mentioned the old times, five years ago, when they used to be so happy together. Never a chance word or look told that she remembered them at all. As for Maurice, an uncomfortable reserve, fast passing into actual dislike for the subject, kept him from recalling, when he and Gwendoline chanced to be left alone, the memories of his former visit. He felt that the glamour was fading away which lay around him then, and yet to feel it so was a stain upon his honor, which chafed and annoyed him. Since Gwendoline never mentioned the subject herself, it was best left unmentioned. Possibly she, too, might have changed.

Maurice found himself catching eagerly, with a feeling of intense relief, at that thought. He wished that it might be a true thought, and yet the better self of him knew that it never could be true. Still, something in Miss Lyneton's manner gave color to the suspicion. If, when Rose was by, he alluded, in a merry, jesting manner, to his former visit, Gwendoline's face clouded over, and with a certain grave rebuke in her expression, she would turn the conversation into some less personal channel. Would she have done so, Maurice thought, if those memories had been precious memories to her? Would she not have smiled to hear them brought back again? Would not some bright glance or tender tone have told that she held them still dear as ever in her true and faithful heart? Surely she must have forgotten. Surely they were precious no longer. He almost hoped it was so.

But Gwendoline only turned upon him that glance of grave rebuke, because the things of which he spoke were too precious to be so lightly handled, so carelessly bandied about in the pleasant freedom of fireside talk. She remembered them as she remembered holy things, quietly and alone.

Rose Beresford knew nothing about all this. *Perhaps if she had it* would not have made much difference to her. Hers was not that fine, keen sense of honor which shrinks from appropriating what belongs to another. In this case, however, her ignorance saved her from meanness. She only knew that Major Demeron was very handsome and very fascinating, and that if he proposed to her, she would not say him nay.

He was beginning to admire her. Many a bright, quick glance had told her that, when Gwendoline was not by to note it. And at night, sitting up in her own room, she would gaze, by the hour together, upon the fair face reflected in the old-fashioned pier-glass over the mantle-piece; that very old fashioned pier-glass, not new a hundred years ago, which had reflected many a noble Lyneton face in its time, but none so bright and sparkling as her own, none so richly shadowed with dark glossy curls rippling away over forehead and cheek in such silken tendrils. For the Lynetons were all fair-haired, pale of face; their only beauty that of perfect form and expression, the chiselled beauty which grows out of centuries of cultivation. And the spirit which lighted up those calm, grand features of theirs was more proud than changeful; it shone out clearly and steadily, but with no sparkle.

That sort of beauty was very well in its way, Rose said, as she meditated before the old-fashioned pier-glass; but the vivid charm of complexion and color was much more fascinating. Many people preferred that to even the most faultlessly-chiselled contour. She thought Major Demeron did, from something he had once said about those old family portraits in the oriel-room, whose colorless Greek profiles looked so very stately against the backgrounds of dark drapery. No rosy cheeks and laughing dark eyes there, only straight, pale brown hair, folded over faces so calm and still.

Major Demeron said he liked color and animation; the marble beauty of a statue wearied him, he said. And Rose Beresford was not vexed to hear him say it.

Once only during that week, in one of their rides to Oresbridge, they met Hugh Deeping, met him on the Lyneton Abbots road with a lot of loose-looking, would-be-fashionable young men. And he had passed them with a very careless, defiant air, almost insolent in its independence. Gwendoline scarcely thought he could be the same young man who used to behave, spite of his lowly birth and commonplace companionship, with such almost chivalrous gentleness in the oriel-room at Lyneton Abbots. There was a sort of nobleness about him then, joined with a fine humility, which made her willing to forget for a time how far they stood apart. Now he was so changed. The true nature of the man, she said to herself, coming up through the thin outer crust of polish. And then she glanced at Maurice Demeron, whose refinement was ingrained, a heritage which no change of circumstance could alienate; whose honor and chivalry came to him with the name he bore.

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He would never stoop to any thing mean. He would never tarnish, by spoken or acted falsehood, that fine gentlemanhood of his. And though there was a little sadness in her look, and though she turned her face gravely away when their eyes met, yet she trusted him still.

Yes; the real plebeian nature had worked its way up again in Hugh Deeping as soon as he was left to himself. And during that same afternoon drive, Rose Beresford called in at Mrs. Mallinson's to inquire for some trifle which she had forgotten to bring away with her when she came to Lyneton Abbots; and then, staying for a little while to ask with characteristic kindliness after the welfare of all the good people at Canton House—for, indeed, both she and Mrs. Beresford had been very comfortable, on the whole—she was treated to a lengthy account of the young man's desperate ways, how he used to be met constantly on Saturday afternoons with a set of disreputable young fellows, such as he would have been ashamed to have spoken to a month ago, and how he was heard of at the Castle Gardens on Sundays, which, as every body in Oresbridge knew, was the very last place where any one who cared a straw for his own respectability would let himself be seen, and on Sundays of all days, too. Every one knew what to think of a young man when once he had been seen at the Castle Gardens. And people coming to his lodgings, too, with bills for wines and spirits, and shabby, slouching men leaving dirty little notes for him; to say nothing of his bringing in such a smell of cigar smoke, and whistling low tunes as he went up stairs to his rooms, a thing that Mrs. Mallinson detested, for it gave such a gin-shop sort of air to a house when people went whistling up stairs, and carrying about the smell of smoke with them.

"Quite a changed character, Miss Beresford," observed Mrs. Mallinson, who was in an unwonted state of bustle and flurry, partly by reason of the honor Miss Beresford had done her in inquiring about the family, and partly by reason of some cakes which wanted looking after just then in the oven. "Quite a changed character, as much so as ever I saw in all my life; to that extent that you wouldn't believe him to be the same. And so very modest and unassuming as he used to conduct himself when first he come! Indeed, it was all I could do of a night to get him down here into the back parlor, just for the sake of a bit of company for Sarah Matilda, which was an advantage, one may say, having such a fine bass voice.

"Not that she wants it now, though," and Mrs. Mallinson bridled up, "for I'm happy to say she's settled with a young man as me and my husband couldn't wish any thing more suitable for her, being well established in the confectionery line, and with the best of prospects, and every thing as she's likely to be comfortable with, and intends to take his country house, if trade keeps up, which I don't suppose Mr. *Deeping will have the means* of doing, if he *don't intend to mend his* ways. But he never seemed to have an idea of any thing of the sor nor took advantage of it when it was put in hi way. Indeed, me and my husband both said was plain his affections was took in some othe direction, and perhaps it had gone wrong wit him, which it sometimes has an effect in thi way.

"But I ask your pardon, miss, I'm sure I d for making free with so many remarks; on you was so very agreeable when you and yo ma had the apartments, a great deal more than Mr. Deeping, and never held yourself from any thing like a little bit of chat, whi there's no harm in, whatever station folks belon to. But so long as he pays his rent regular, a doesn't bring no improper company to the hou it isn't my business to make any remarks, a I don't mean to, because I never was a wom that went out of my way to interfere with oth people; it's a thing I don't approve of, and ne er encourages it in my family. And the ca riage waiting, too, I declare, just in front of t shop, with such a beautiful pair of horse Dear me! they *are* beautiful horses! I alwa say I never see such beautiful horses anywhe as Mr. Lyneton's."

And Mrs. Mallinson conducted her visit out of the front door, and then stationed herse behind the tea-canisters in the shop window, see the carriage start, wondering, meanwhi what Mrs. Green, the meek-faced widow, a lit further down the road on the opposite sid would think about it. For Mrs. Green wou be sure to be standing behind the counter, wa ing for customers, and she would see the ca riage stop, and perhaps send the boy out to a whose it was. It gave such an air to a sh when a carriage stood before it, especially carriage like the Lyneton Abbots carriage, whi looked as if it belonged to an old family.

Rose Beresford did not fail to repeat the d tail of poor Hugh's misdemeanors and imper ing downfall, as they all rode home to Lynet Abbots. Also, she imitated, with laughal exactness, Mrs. Mallinson's provincial acce and the vigorous sniffs which had accompani the recital; not forgetting, either, the episo of Sarah Matilda's prospects, upon which h "ma" had dwelt with such complete satisfa tion.

"And so you see, Miss Lyneton, I was m taken, after all, in my belief that this redout able Mr. Deeping was trying to produce an ir pression in that quarter. I rather fancy, no that Sarah Matilda had taken the aggressi side herself, and was intent upon storming t citadel of the poor young man's affections, wh I chanced to behold her looking up into his fa with such sweet affectionateness. What a pit now, is it not, that my darling little fabric romance should come to the ground in th way? I could have been so sure that the was an understanding between them; and th to find it all end in smoke; nothing of the kin but indeed quite the reverse, as Mr. Deepi seems, from Mrs. Mallinson's account now,

have been rather reserved than otherwise in his connection with the family. But never mind. If I *was* mistaken, it made a little bit of nonsense for us, just the same as it had been true. And nonsense is such a delightful thing. It's the delightfullest thing in the world is nonsense."

And again Rose did that distinctive Mallinson sniff, with its lateral twist of face and shoulder, to Major Demeron's infinite amusement. Rose's arch playfulness was becoming very attractive to him, and the more so from its contrast with Gwendoline's controlled gravity. This pretty young Irish girl really was such a bewitching mixture of raillery and playfulness, so very different from the high-born English ladies, who never seemed to lose sight of their pedigrees.

When they reached the avenue which led into the village of Lyneton Abbots, he proposed that they should walk the remainder of the way; so the carriage was sent forward, and together they sauntered on, plucking the violets and primroses as they went. Spring was just touching the trees with her young loveliness. Upon the hedge-rows and the distant woods there bloomed already the manifold soft tints of myriads of tiny buds, russet, olive, brown, and purple, which only waited for a few days of sunshine to break forth into living green. And in every little cottage-garden the crocuses made a golden glow, and pale snow-drops trembled for joy at their own loveliness, and the delicate periwinkle looked out, with eyes of Rose Beresford's color, from cool dark-green leaves. Sweet English flowers, which Maurice Demeron had missed so long, fairer in their gentle beauty than all the brilliant purple blossoms of India. Maurice Demeron loved the spring-time, loved it in other things than flowers.

As they passed the gate-way, he paused for a moment with Gwendoline Lyneton under the old stone griffins. They looked so grim and defiant there, with the long beards of moss hanging from their open jaws, and brown lichens filling up the crevices of their hollow eyes. Not changed at all since five years ago, except that the moss was richer and greener, and those brown lichens had not such a golden flush as the July sun put there, then.

With a light smile and a lighter tone, Maurice Demeron said, as he glanced up at them—

"Time has dealt gently with them, Greta!"

She turned quickly and looked him in the face. Could he speak so carelessly of what had been so sacred to them both? Could he stain with a meaningless laugh the sweet memory of that July night? Or did he not care to treasure it any more now, and would he so let her see that it had lost its worth? Perhaps there was more coldness in her voice than she meant to put there, as she replied—

"Yes. I wish he had dealt as gently with others."

"*And changed them as little*," said Maurice Demeron.

"And changed them as little," returned Gwendoline, walking proudly on.

Maurice Demeron looked after her as she turned away from him. And then, half unconsciously, his glance wandered toward Rose Beresford, who, standing over the old stone dial, was trying to make out its legend. Her bending figure was full of ease and grace. The frosty March air had kindled a rosy glow in her cheeks, and a deeper light in the sparkling eyes, which, even as he looked, were turned upon him with such an arch, merry glance.

Maurice Demeron thought there was nothing like the beauty and freshness of Spring.

CHAPTER XLIII.

When they reached the house, Gwendoline went into her own room, and wrote to Aunt Hildegarde, giving her the information which Mrs. Mallinson had given to Rose Beresford, with instructions that Jeanie should also be informed of it, and so any lingering tenderness, or even respect which she might have for Hugh Deeping, might die out, as indeed there was abundant reason that it should die out, now.

For though he had not been false in the way that Gwendoline thought at first; though she dwelt with a faint touch of regret, now, on the harsh judgment which she and her brother had formed of him after hearing those idle words of Rose Beresford's, words which it seemed had no foundation of truth, still he had done enough to forfeit their confidence. He had very grossly presumed upon their kindness to him. He was allowing himself now to be led into wrong and vicious courses, proving that the refinement for which they had once given him credit was but an outside garb, worn for convenience, and easily cast off when the need for keeping it had gone. He had altogether shown himself unworthy of the kindness which the Lyneton Abbots people, pitying his loneliness, had reached out to him. And Jeanie ought to be told of this.

It was a long letter, and of weighty import, needing to be carefully worded, too, lest it should seem to exalt into overmuch importance what after all was only to be referred to by Aunt Hildegarde as a piece of passing information, just one item, among many others, of home news which might serve to interest Jeanie so far away. That was all. That was just how Aunt Hildegarde was to put it; a fragment of Oresbridge gossip, nothing more than that.

Gwendoline was a long time writing it, yet perhaps Maurice Demeron and Rose Beresford, singing duets together in the oriel-room, did not think the time overlong. For Rose could sing so sweetly, and Maurice loved so well to listen. It was long since he had heard a voice like that. It seemed to tell out so much of love and tenderness. He liked those warm, frank natures, that did not care to hide themselves behind a vexing mantle of reserve. He loved to look through

Rose's glowing face as she sang, and read, as he thought, the story of the glowing heart within. Better that than to be forever waiting at the closed doors of coldness and self-control. Miss Lyneton might have written for hours, and neither Rose nor Maurice would have wearied.

So Aunt Hidegarde told Jeanie, among other equally unimportant little items of home intelligences, that Mr. Deeping was becoming very unsteady, and that he caused his friends a great deal of anxiety; that he was forming loose companionships, and that Mr. Lyneton had discontinued his assistance in the management of the estate, as it was now in a condition not to require so much supervision.

And then the letter proceeded to a description of the last full-dress concert at Oresbridge, to which the Lyneton Abbots party had gone. A very gay affair, though, of course, not nearly so brilliant as those which Jeanie would have the opportunity of attending in town. But Major Demeron was very fond of music, and having been for so many years unable to indulge his taste for it, he seemed to enjoy even the very limited advantages which Oresbridge could afford. And an evening of that kind was a pleasant change, too, for Rose Beresford, who was not accustomed to such a very secluded life as they lived at the Manor House. Though really she seemed very bright and happy, and never complained of dullness, though they did see so very little company. But she was one of those bright, buoyant-spirited girls, who can make themselves happy almost anywhere.

Jeanie listened quietly, making no remark about that part of the letter which related to Hugh Deeping. She had always taken things very quietly since she came up to town. Aunt Hildegarde thought she was scarcely so bright as she used to be, but then girls rarely keep that gay, flashing liveliness after seventeen or eighteen. And the Lynetons were always sedate—at least, most of them. It ran in the family, like the pale brown hair and faultlessly-chiselled features, which made the women of the race so distinguished looking. But still Gwendoline must not think that Jeanie was getting into low spirits; nothing of the sort. She was quite contented and happy, and entered into society with as much animation as could be expected from a young girl who had been brought up in such strict retirement. And they were going down to Barton Firs next week for a few days. Sir William had taken a wonderful fancy to the child ever since he had been introduced to her at the county ball. Indeed, it was quite evident what his heart was set upon. Nothing would please him so much, Aunt Hildegarde knew, as a match between his nephew and Jeanie. And such a match would be very suitable, too, in every respect; for though not of quite so good extraction as the Lynetons, yet Sir William belonged to a thoroughly respectable family, and Martin Allington's prospects were such as very few young men could look forward to. He was so very steady, too, and promising, and Aunt Hildegarde only wished that Jeanie would receive his attentions rather more kindly, or, at any rate, that she appeared more conscious of them. She really almost lost patience with her sometimes, she seemed so very blind to her own interests, and treated as a matter of perfect indifference what most girls would have been so proud of. But then again, as Aunt Hildegarde said, that might only be her natural disposition, or perhaps girlish shyness and reserve, not liking to show all she felt; which was certainly the best extreme of the two, if there must be an extreme in one direction or the other.

But Jeanie lived on her own quiet life all the time—a life far enough removed from the amusements which they heaped upon her; a life which neither Sir William, nor Barton Firs, nor young Martin Allington, nor all the pomp and splendor of London society could move from its firm anchorage of faith and trust. They might say what they liked, they might take her where they chose, they might fill up her days with one brilliant round of visiting and sight-seeing—it was of very little consequence. If she lacked some of the Lyneton pride, she did not lack any of the Lyneton steadfastness. And as the traveller, coming home from foreign lands, takes up his own country language again, and falls at once into its sweet familiar accents, no space of time or distance making them strange to him, so when they left her to herself, Jeanie came back again to her own sweet haven of thought, and took up the speech of the olden time, and gathered round her the old memories, and rested there and was at peace.

So the days passed on, until Maurice Demeron's week was over, and courtesy and respect alike behooved that he should present himself to his relations in the North, whom as yet he had not seen since his return from India.

Besides, as matters still were, he felt there was an awkwardness in his staying at Lyneton Abbots; though he could willingly have lengthened out the days—each one widening the distance between himself and Gwendoline—which Rose's sweet voice and pleasant, winning ways made to pass so quickly. Rose, whose smile never failed, who never wearied of listening to his stories of peril and adventure in the far East; who would sing to him for the whole long evening, while Gwendoline sat apart, grave, silent, reserved.

He was more than ever bewildered by Miss Lyneton's manner. She never seemed to care now to speak of those old days; and yet that she had not forgotten them, he felt sure by the conscious restraint of her ways if ever she chanced to be alone with him. Did she, then, repent of that unspoken promise which they both understood so well,—given perhaps before they truly knew each other, before they were old enough to enter into all its meaning? No, something told him she had not changed. It was a rash promise, may be. And yet he did love her very much. Those were such pleasant days when they two had strayed together up and down the

old garden, and Jeanie, a laughing, sunny-faced child, had chased butterflies across the flower-beds, or caught the great red and black lady-birds that crept so lazily over the currant-bushes. Yes, those were pleasant days. Gwendoline was quiet and thoughtful even then, but there was a gentleness in her ways, and when they looked into each other's faces, there was the sweet happy consciousness of trust between them which needed no words to make it faster.

Maurice Demeron dared not look steadily into Gwendoline's eyes now. If he had read unwavering faith there, it would have grieved him that his own should swerve so far aside. If he had read rebuke and questioning, it would have humbled him. If he could but have read change there!

Maurice was half angry with himself at first, when he felt what a relief that would have been. True, he was not bound to Gwendoline by any actual obligation. What promise existed was between themselves alone. No one knew of it. He could put it aside, and society would call him as fine a gentleman as before. And he knew Gwendoline Lyneton well enough to be sure that she would rather die than betray the slight which he had thus put upon her. Her pride would shield him from dishonor better far than it could shield herself from pain. Should he then go free himself?

These thoughts came, and Maurice Demeron did not hate himself for them. He let them creep into his heart, and brood and strengthen there. Sometimes his better nature stirred within him, and he resolved, since he could be true no longer, to tell her boldly so, and bear his humiliation like a man. Then his courage failed, he could not bring himself to acknowledge that he was less strong, less faithful than this woman whose love he had once prized so well. It might be cowardly, but it would be more comfortable, to let Gwendoline learn by his silence, what to tell her in any other way would have been too great a shame.

And besides, he was not quite sure, yet, that he *did* want her to know this at all. He had not altogether ceased to remember the past with something like reverence and longing. There were times when Gwendoline almost had her old power over him. He could not let her go. He could not bring himself to think that the past was all a mistake on his part, or that he could be just so happy with any one else as with her. There was something in her that he could rest upon; and though he did not always need that rest, yet it would be pleasant to feel it always there.

Once, coming unawares into the room while Miss Lyneton, thinking herself alone, was singing some of the songs she used to sing five years ago, all the sweetness and truth of that beautiful life seemed to come back upon him. As through a rift in clouds one sees far off the clear shining of stars, he felt again the glow of the old love. *The faith and honor* that had well-nigh *died out in his heart struggled* up once more. He felt that that life was indeed his best, his purest; that he could give no love to any one else so unselfish as that which Gwendoline once held. Nor would he ever win a gift so sweet, so precious, as this which he was suffering to fall from him now. He would come back to the old allegiance. He would be true to honor and to her.

But just then Rose Beresford came in, bright, gay, smiling, and all his high resolves melted away like the changeful pictures of a dissolving view. Fancy's bright colors quivered upon the fading tints of Honor, which slowly died away and left Fancy's picture undimmed. Once suffered to die out, they never came again.

Slowly those days passed away for Gwendoline. This home-coming of Maurice Demeron had brought her no peace as yet. She had looked to it as travellers in the desert look to the palm-trees' cool shadow, and when they near it, all is gone; nothing round about them but the desert still, over which they must toil patiently on through so many, many leagues. Yet she never doubted him even now. Hers was a faith that could bear very much. Too proud, too noble to dream of change herself, she did not fear it from those she trusted. All would yet be well. And that coldness and restraint which sometimes she showed before him, was not so much for inconstancy that she feared in him, as to hide the fullness of her own great heart.

And so that week passed until Sunday came, and on the morrow Major Demeron was to go to his friends in Scotland. Once more they had sat together in the old church at Lyneton Abbots, beneath their feet the dust of the old knights who lived so purely and loved so truly; all around them, with clasped hands and calm faces, the effigies of those same Lyneton knights, fast crumbling to decay, like the fortunes of their race. Once more Maurice Demeron had looked at the graven figure of the Lady Gwendoline de Lyneton, whose straight, level brows and placid features used to seem so like those of his own Gwendoline, when six years ago he glanced from one to the other. He did not so much care to mark the likeness now, for Rose Beresford was sitting just before him in the corner of the pew, where Jeanie used to sit; and who, looking upon her rich young face with all its warm glow of life and loveliness, could care to turn from that to the grave features of the Lady Gwendoline, dead five centuries ago?

Rose, the rosebud; sweetest, brightest. When should he see her again, when should she sing to him any more those tender songs of hers, which had already told so much? Fancy's picture had the canvas all her own now. Truth, Honor, Faithfulness, no longer dimmed her fair colors with any fading tints of theirs. It was no thought of Gwendoline which strayed so sweetly through his heart that night; it was no regret for leaving her which saddened him as he knelt for the last time in the old church of Lyneton Abbots.

Evening service was over. They came out

into the narrow grassy road which lay between the church-yard yew-trees and the Manor House. Had she cared for him less, Miss Lyneton might have kept by Maurice Demeron's side for the little space they had to go; but with the old proud reserve which would never let her give much outward show of regard, she took her brother's arm, leaving Maurice and Rose behind in the gathering gloom of the evening.

Half an hour later, she came down from that old dormer-windowed room, her prayer-book in her hand, ready to join Mr. Lyneton in the library, where they always had prayers on Sunday night. The hall door was open, the light from the purple-shaded lamp pouring out into the garden. With just so warm a glow, scarce more than a few days since it had fallen upon the balustraded terrace in front of the door-way, as she came down stairs dressed for the county ball.

Gwendoline might be thinking of that night, a fateful one for poor Hugh Deeping, standing out there in the track of the lamp-light.

As some one else stood now. Not poor Hugh Deeping, though. That tall figure and fair curling hair belong to Maurice Demeron. And by him stood Rose Beresford, her bright face flushed and smiling. They did not see her. Rose was looking down too earnestly for seeing, and Maurice Demeron's face was toward the gloom. But Gwendoline could hear his low tones. She had heard him speak like that long ago, five years ago. His voice had a sound like that when he said good-bye to her under the old gateway before he went away to India.

For one little moment she stood there, fixed, motionless. Just long enough to understand it all. Then she turned and went quietly back to her own room.

For truly they were a silent, self-controlled people, these Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots.

CHAPTER XLIV.

NEXT morning Maurice Demeron went away to visit his friends in the North. Went away quite brightly and cheerfully, with only that little tinge of courteous regret in voice and manner which seemed suitable in parting from people who had been so kind to him; whom he had known so long, and who, when he was scarcely more than a boy, had shown him much friendly attention.

He said he was very sorry to go away from Lyneton Abbots, but as he had so short a leave of absence, only little more than six months altogether, he must make the best use of his time. And he really had so many people to see in London, and so much business to attend to, and so many commissions to look after for his friends out there in India, who seemed to think *that when a* fellow came home for a few weeks *he had nothing to do but run* up and down the *country and do errands for them.* But if possible *he would look in at Lyneton* Abbots again, just to say good-bye before he sailed, in the latter part of the autumn. He should have to pass Oresbridge on his way up to town, and it would be such a great pleasure to him to have another day with Mr. Lyneton. And they were to give his kindest remembrances to Jeanie. He was sorry not to have seen her, but as soon as he got to town he meant to find his way to Eaton Square, and send them word how she was looking, and whether she seemed to be pining after home. Though he did not think that would be the case, for London was such a charming place for a young lady to visit, especially if she had an Aunt Hildegarde to take her all over, and go with her to those delicious operas. And Miss Lyneton was to be sure to remember him very kindly when she wrote, and say that he did not forget what good friends they used to be, and what delightful games they used to have in that old garden five years ago. She must have forgotten them herself, though, for five years was such a long time. So many changes happened in five years, and people learned to think so differently about things.

To all which pleasant farewells and messages, Gwendoline listened very courteously, and when she replied to them there was not a touch of cold rebuke in her voice. Neither was there any need now for the half-averted look of reserve or constraint. She could meet his glance very fearlessly, her own having nothing to conceal any longer; nothing either to seek in his but mere pleasant friendship. She said they had all been very pleased to see Mr. Demeron, and to hear how successful he had been, and what good prospects he had out in India. And he must remember them also very kindly to his friends in the North, and if he could spare another day for Lyneton Abbots before he sailed, they would be very happy to see him, though, of course, he must have many things to occupy his time, and many people to see, and much business of various kinds to transact. Still, old friends had a claim, and he must not quite forget it. And they were sure Aunt Hildegarde would be most happy to see him in Eaton Square, and he must send them word how Jeanie was looking, although she always wrote in such very even spirits, and seemed so contented and happy, that they had no anxiety about her. Still, it would be satisfactory to hear from one who had really seen her.

And then Mr. Lyneton said it was a thousand pities that Major Demeron should just set off to India when the shooting season was commencing, and if he *could* manage to snatch a day or two in October, they must try to get an excursion over the moors, though, of course, the bringing down of grouse and partridges must be a very tame affair to him after those brilliant adventures among lions and tigers in the Indian jungles. But, at any rate, a day on the moors would serve to bring back the old times, when the Major, quite a stripling, came to Lyneton Abbots for the first time, and seemed to enjoy

it. Mr. Lyneton had not forgotten what a pleasant visit that was for all of them, and how sorry they felt when his regiment was ordered abroad. He certainly must try and come over, just for one day's shooting in October.

Altogether a bright and satisfactory leave-taking, perhaps more overflowing on Maurice Demeron's part with expressions of good-will because he felt that he had not quite acted the part of a gentleman, and so he would cover his unconfessed delinquencies with a gayer, more abundant courtesy. But whatever any of them might feel, only smiles were to be seen, and wavings of hands, as Major Demeron and Mr. Lyneton drove away to the Oresbridge station, leaving Gwendoline and Rose Beresford standing in the gate-way looking after them.

The old griffin-guarded stone gate-way.

Rose did not stay quite so long at Lyneton Abbots as they expected. Not many days after Maurice Demeron went away, there came a letter from Mrs. Beresford, requesting her return to Grantford, regretting that she could not be spared for a longer time, and thanking Miss Lyneton for all the kindness which had made her visit already so pleasant.

So there was another leave-taking at the old gate-way, quite as full of regrets and expressions of good-will as that which had taken place when Mr. Lyneton conveyed his Indian guest away. Rose was so very much obliged to her dear Miss Lyneton for having been so good to her, and she should have been so delighted to have stayed longer, only Grantford was such a wretchedly stupid little place, and poor mamma was so bored there; she was afraid it would have quite a serious effect upon her health if she was left alone much longer. So she was sure dear Miss Lyneton would not think her ungrateful in running away so soon, when she had promised to stay with them until Jeanie's return. But although her visit had been unexpectedly curtailed, yet it had been quite long enough to leave a most delightful impression upon her memory. She should never be able to forget all Miss Lyneton's kindness to her, and the very, *very* happy days she had spent in the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Even though, as dear Miss Lyneton said, it *had* been a very quiet visit, yet she had not enjoyed it the less on that account, for there was always a charm in the country, go to it when you would, and she did not think that even Dublin, with all its gayety, had ever delighted her so much as the elegant quietness and seclusion of Lyneton Abbots. Miss Lyneton must receive her warmest thanks, and she should never forget all the kindness that had been shown to her.

To which also Gwendoline listened with grave, quiet courtesy, as it was her way to listen to most things. In due time Miss Beresford wrote from Grantford to inform Miss Lyneton of her engagement to Major Demeron. It was a very long letter, crossed and crossed again, full of *pretty little confidences*, and warm expressions *of attachment.* She was sure that dear Miss Lyneton would rejoice with her in the future which had so very unexpectedly opened before her. So very unexpectedly, for she never had the least idea, when she came to Lyneton Abbots, that her visit would have produced such important results. And, indeed, she could scarcely bring herself to believe that she was really going to be married so soon, in less than six months, to a person who as many weeks ago had been a complete stranger to her. Not half a year to bring her mind to it, and get her outfit ready, and do every thing that was necessary; and pay her farewell visits, which of course she must do to all her friends, as she was going to leave the country, and would, perhaps, not return for many years. And she hoped Miss Lyneton would not think she had been too hasty, but these things, when they did come, often came so very unexpectedly, people were taken quite by surprise, and had scarcely time to consider what they were doing until it was done. And really it would have seemed so much more likely if Miss Lyneton herself had gone out to India as Major Demeron's bride, having known him so long, indeed ever since he was quite a young man; and such respect, too, between the families, it was quite delightful to hear him speak of his old friend Gwendoline, he had such an unbounded regard for her, and she should almost feel inclined to be jealous of her sometimes, if Maurice did not assure her that he had never really cared for any one as he cared for herself. Strange, was it not, when he had been so much about in the world, and had had so many opportunities of mixing with the best society? She must say that she could not return the compliment, for she had met with many people since she came out who had made quite as deep an impression upon her as Maurice. But then she was such a very impressible girl, so easily wrought upon by a little kindness; she felt quite angry with herself sometimes for being so easily led away.

And would dear Miss Lyneton and Jeanie be her brides-maids? She should so like her marriage-day to be associated with thoughts of the dear friends at Lyneton Abbots; and since it was there she had first seen Maurice, it would seem so pleasant to have some one belonging to the place about her then. But she hoped she should see Miss Lyneton again before autumn, when the wedding was to take place; for she and her mamma had received invitations to the hunt ball at Oresbridge in May, and of course Miss Lyneton would be there. It would not be such an unexpected meeting this time, and would not lead to such unexpected results either, as had been produced by their meeting at that other ball last March. What a strange thing that was. After the hunt ball she was going into Ireland, to pay some visits to her friends there, who would most likely keep her with them all the summer, as she should perhaps never have the opportunity of seeing them again.

And she had one other request to make. Would dear Miss Lyneton write to her very

soon, and give her a great deal of good advice, for she felt herself so young and inexperienced, and going out to India was such a serious undertaking; she almost felt sometimes as if she had been too rash in promising so much upon such a short acquaintance. And on that account she should so prize a letter from Miss Lyneton, who was so very matured and thoughtful, and always seemed to know exactly what to do and say and think about every thing; so different to her own poor little thoughtless, mischievous self. Yes, dear Miss Lyneton must write to her very soon, and tell her all that she thought about it.

Gwendoline did write. Her letter was not quite so long as Rose's, and doubtless did not contain all that the writer thought. But it was a very kind letter, containing suitable good wishes and congratulations on the very unexpected change in Rose's prospects. Miss Lyneton sincerely hoped she would never have cause to regret the very important step she had taken, and that the engagement would be productive of lasting happiness, both to herself and Major Demeron. Mr. Lyneton had known him for many years, indeed, ever since he was quite a young man, and he believed him to be very upright and gentlemanly, so that she thought Rose need not fear; though, as she said, it *was* a very important step to take, important under any circumstances, but still more so when it involved the giving up of home and country and friends to go so far away. Miss Lyneton was afraid she could not oblige Miss Beresford by acting as her brides-maid, for she never left her brother alone now, but she thought Jeanie would be very glad to have that opportunity of showing her attachment to an old friend. Indeed, if she remembered rightly, it was one of their childish compacts in the merry days when they used to play together in the garden at Lyneton Abbots, that whoever married first should have the other for bride-maiden. And she enclosed Jeanie's address, in order that Miss Beresford might, if she chose, renew the invitation herself.

When all this had been written, Gwendoline thought she had said enough, and she read the letter carefully over, to be sure that not one little tinge of bitterness had crept up unawares, and colored the quiet friendliness of it. But it was all right. If it did not overflow with felicitations, that was only because she was a person who seldom gave them. She could not deal in the empty compliments which come so naturally to some letter-writers. She always meant what she said, and when she could not truly rejoice with those that rejoiced, she was wisely silent. It had been rather difficult to write that letter at all, so that Maurice Demeron, reading it over as he most likely would, should not be able to lay his finger upon a single sentence which had any undermeaning of sadness in it. She had succeeded, though perhaps Rose might call her rather cold and unsympathetic. Better so; better the reserved cordiality which she could honestly give for Rose's sake, than any parade of congratulations whose assumed gayety would only make him guess more truly the sad heart out of which she had written them.

And then she went down stairs to accompany her brother in his daily walk, chatting to him the while in her usual pleasant, intelligent manner. Those mediæval Alices and Lady Gwendolines, sleeping their last sleep under the Manor House pew, were scarcely less silent touching any of their joys and sorrows than this living woman who bore their name, and who hoped ere long to lie quietly beside them.

It could not be too soon now, she thought.

CHAPTER XLV.

No one belonging to the old house at Lyneton Abbots marked any change in Miss Lyneton after that eventful Sunday evening which ended five years of trust and waiting. She read to her brother, wrote his letters for him, helped him in business matters connected with the estate, and did her best to make his life pass easily along, just as she had done when her own had still hope and brightness left in it. Nay, she even gave herself more entirely to him, for now that both Rose and Jeanie were away, he was so very dependent upon her. She must try to be all to him that they had been. Which was no easy task, for Rose was so very merry and companionable. She had such an unfailing store of mirthfulness. The old house scarcely knew itself for the same during the three weeks that she stayed there, for she filled it from morning till night with the music of her voice. She would sing to them, or tell them stories, or amuse them with her quizzical imitations of Irish oddities, until even the grave Mr. Lyneton forgot his dignity, and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Of course such a visitor would be very much missed, and Gwendoline had need to rouse herself and fill the vacant place, if not with equal store of wit and mirth, at least with such resources as she could command; a daily call upon her which left but little time for idle regrets or any bitter musings over the past. When the day was done, and no one needed any care of hers, she might perhaps sit alone, hour after hour, in that dormer-windowed room where the first Mrs. Lyneton had died. She might think her own thoughts there, and ungird for a little season that chain-mail of forced cheerfulness which pressed so tightly sometimes. But if so, it was girded on again safely as ever before the daily task returned; none knowing that it was heavy to bear, or even that she bore it at all. And so long as she was kind and courteous to the people who looked to her for daily help, it was no concern of theirs what thoughts she had when that help was no longer needed.

The upper-class gossips of the village had their own speculations about Major Demeron's

visit to the Manor House. It was not likely that a noble-looking man of military garb and aspect should have been there for a week without any theory being set afloat concerning his probable wishes and intentions. It was the last thing the lawyer's wife and the doctor's wife, and the aristocratic widows and maiden ladies would have done, to allow such a visitor as that to come and go with never a definite understanding of what he came for.

If Mrs. Lucombe was not very much mistaken, she remembered a gentleman of that name, though he was not a major then, but only a young ensign, coming to Lyneton Abbots five or six years ago, when Miss Lyneton was younger and brighter, and more blooming than at the present time. Mrs. Lucombe had lived in the village two-and-twenty years, in fact ever since the marriage of the first Mrs. Lyneton, and she knew every thing that had gone on in that house, and the name of every one who had come to it, and she certainly *did* remember a Mr. Demeron visiting there, two or three years in succession, always during the shooting season. Indeed her husband, being a good sportsman, and very fond of it, had once or twice joined Mr. Lyneton and the young ensign in their excursions over the moors. A capital shot he was, too, Mr. Lucombe said, just the man for a soldier, no fear of his bringing down his game, be it man or bird. Only so rash with his gun, so very imprudent and daring. He would pitch it about like a conjurer's rod, without even giving himself the trouble to find out whether both the barrels had been discharged or not. She would have been in terror the whole time her husband was with them, only he was so very cautious, and always took care to keep at a safe distance. And he had often warned Mr. Demeron about it, but young men were so careless, they seemed to have a sort of pride in putting their lives in peril, to say nothing of the anxiety it caused to others.

A very fine-looking young man, Mrs. Lucombe said, if she remembered rightly; tall, well-made, aristocratic in his appearance. Every one said what a handsome couple they would be if they *did* make a match of it. And indeed that seemed a very likely termination of his visit, for there was nothing else to attract him in that direction, except the shooting; and they were continually seen together in the garden, or strolling about the Lyneton Abbots woods, in company with Mr. Lyneton. And then his regiment was appointed to foreign service, a disappointment doubtless to the young people, though fortunate, looked at in a worldly point of view, because the officers in India got such good pay and quick promotion. After that every one noticed that Miss Lyneton withdrew very much from society, rarely attended balls or any thing of that sort; indeed lived almost entirely at home, and Mrs. Lucombe believed that young Demeron's departure had something to do with the fact of her being *Miss Lyneton still.*

But Mrs. Jacques, who had come to call upon Mrs. Lucombe, and to whom the doctor's wife unfolded these little personal matters connected with the Lyneton Abbots family, did not look upon the matter in the same light. Mrs. Jacques had not lived so long in the village as Mrs. Lucombe. It was only little more than four years since her husband took the legal practice of Mr. Langley, deceased; and therefore she had but comparatively limited opportunities for studying the aspects of life at the Manor House. But if there was one thing Mrs. Jacques disliked more than another, it was these long engagements. She had never allowed any of her daughters to get entangled in them, for they were the most unsatisfactory things in the world. They invariably ended in smoke, and then where were a gril's prospects, and what was to become of her, unless she took to a vocation, or something of that sort; which, though aristocratic and distinguished, was not at all to be compared to a good establishment and a comfortable home. Her daughter Selina had once been in danger of getting entangled in a long engagement with a young man who was going out to seek his fortunes in India, but she nipped it in the bud, put a stop to it at once, took Selina away to one of the fashionable watering-places, and had the satisfaction of seeing her married before the year was out to a wealthy Oresbridge merchant, who kept his carriage, and lived in one of the handsome villas in the suburbs. Very much better that, and so Selina admitted herself now, than waiting five years, and then perhaps being left behind, after all.

Not that she meant to intimate any thing of that kind in Miss Lyneton's case. Mrs. Lucombe must not think that she intended to cast the slightest reflection upon Major Demeron's position, which was no doubt quite equal to a wife and an establishment now; but from what she had seen during the last few days, she was not disposed to think that he had any serious thoughts in *that* direction. If there was any sort of understanding between them, it was the very last thing in the world that Miss Lyneton ought to have done, to have invited a fascinating, elegant girl like Rose Beresford at the time when Major Demeron was expected home; a girl whose peculiar style of beauty was just the kind to eclipse her own, for every one knew what a pale, washed-out sort of thing a fair-haired, colorless woman, however perfect her features might be, looked when contrasted with a brilliant, animated face like Miss Beresford's. And then that young lady's manners, too, were so fascinating, such an inexpressible charm about her voice and smile, so very winning and agreeable, even apart from her uncommon beauty, that no one of any taste in such matters could help being attracted by her. Really, for her own part, Mrs. Jacques could not imagine whatever Miss Lyneton could have been thinking about to do such an imprudent thing. And if she had any discernment at all in such matters—and she flattered herself upon the possession of as much as most people, if not a little more—she must say that she thought

Major Demeron's intentions, if he had any at all, were in the direction of the younger lady.

Mrs. Lucombe could not believe that. Major Demeron was a perfect gentleman, as her husband said, and he had been brought into contact with him several times before he went out to India, five years ago. Every one suspected then what his intentions were, even though there might not be a definite understanding, on account of both parties being so young. Mrs. Lucombe could not think it of any man that he could behave in that way and mean nothing by it.

"Not even an ordinary person, my dear Mrs. Jacques," said the doctor's wife, with an unusual degree of animation; because, being on calling terms at the Manor House, which Mrs. Jacques was not, she felt it her duty to defend the honor of the aristocracy. "Not even an ordinary person, still less a man of family and breeding like the major, who knows what honor is, and has always acted up to it. No, it will certainly come to a wedding before Major Demeron goes back to India."

But Mrs. Jacques held fast to her own opinion. She asserted that the charm of a beautiful face, like Rose Beresford's, was enough to make a man forget honor and high-breeding and every thing else, except the desire to win it for himself. Miss Lyneton had stood in her own light as completely as it was possible for any woman to do by having such a guest under such circumstances. She could only say that, though her own girls had as little need as most to fear the comparison of superior beauty, yet it was the very last thing in the world she should ever think of doing, to place them in immediate contact with a style like Miss Beresford's. It was not beauty alone, it was that indefinable charm of voice and aspect and manner, which, joined with pretty features and a brilliant complexion, and such rare accomplishments as the young Irish lady was said to possess, rendered their owner perfectly irresistible.

"No, take my word for it, Mrs. Lucombe, Miss Lyneton will *never* be Mrs. Demeron."

And if Mrs. Jacques had had a sniff like Mrs. Mallinson's she would have made use of it then by way of emphasis. But Mrs. Jacques was of course far too much of a lady to have any such distinctive peculiarities. She only inclined her head decidedly enough to make the bird of Paradise in her Genoa velvet bonnet wave its plume in a very effective manner, as she repeated her assertion—"Miss Lyneton will *never* be Mrs. Demeron."

"And I say she *will*," returned the valiant little doctor's wife, in nowise daunted either by Mrs. Jacques or the bird of Paradise.

"Will you hazard a bet upon it, then?" said Mrs. Jacques.

"Certainly," said the doctor's wife.

"A pair of the best French kid, any color *you please*," *said Mrs. Jacques.*

"*Any color you please*," replied the doctor's *wife, who felt confident that if* there was any honor at all in the aristocracy, her glove-box would receive an accession to its contents.

Mrs. Jacques took out her ivory tablets.

"If Miss Lyneton marries Major Demeron before he goes out to India in the autumn, I give you, what color?"

"Steel gray, stitched with black. I shall only be in slight mourning by that time. And if he marries Rose Beresford"—the doctor's wife took out her tablets too—"what is your size?"

Mrs. Jacques looked at her dainty demi-longs of Paris make.

"Six and a quarter. People always say my hand is so uselessly small; a child's size fits me. And a nice pale tint, dear Mrs. Lucombe."

"Certainly, I always pay my debts of honor in the most delicate colors," replied the doctor's wife, making a note in her tablets; "but I am quite sure it will be the steel grays this time."

"And I am convinced it will not, if you will pardon me for being so positive."

And with that remark Mrs. Jacques concluded one of the pleasantest morning calls she had made for a long time. She was quite sure she should get the gloves, though, and she hoped, as she looked out the next name on the list of calls, that they might be of the new season color, to match the trimmings on her last walking-costume. She wished she had thought to mention it to Mrs. Lucombe when they arranged the bet.

For Mrs. Jacques had come down that grassy path on her way home from church the Sunday night before, and she had seen a graceful, elegant girl, certainly not Miss Lyneton, standing by Major Demeron's side in the track of light which poured out from the old door-way of Lyneton Abbots.

Mrs. Jacques thought she knew what that meant.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THEN came sweet spring days, when the olive-brown and russet tints on the Lyneton woods brightened into living green, and every orchard bloomed with rosy flush of apple-blossom, tinted here and there with pearly tint of cherry and sloe; and a bridal veil of white covered the young sprays of hawthorn that peered out from copse and dingle, or nestled coyly beneath the shadow of the great oak-trees on the Lyneton Abbots road. And one looked no more for snowdrops upon the woodland paths, for all May's perfumed flowers had rushed together into bloom, and the glades were blue with hyacinths, and sweet woodruff scented all the air, and many a tangled growth of eglantine clambered among blackberry and briony over the untrimmed hedges, falling over sometimes to make a leafy bower, where the little children sat and wove their daisy chains, or tied up the cowslips which they had gathered in the meadows. Sweet spring days, when the lark began his carolling song, and the blackbird piped from the dewy shelter of the woods; and from the shadow of the fir-tree

planting near by the old home at Lyneton Abbots, dark even at noonday, the low sweet tones of the cushat dove told how patiently she waited for her mate.

Sweet spring days, whose sweetness poor Hugh Deeping never felt; for all through that bright May month he lay within the valley of the shadow of death, where no sunshine could reach him any more, nor song of merry birds, nor scent of flowers from woods where the young year's life was pulsing loud and strong. It mattered little to Hugh, with Death's black wing brooding over him, what brightness might be beyond it. Within that shadow he lay at rest, alike from pain or joy, knowing no present, remembering no past, looking forward to no future.

Day by day, night by night, his sad-hearted mother watched over him in that little room at Canton House; Betsy's heavy footfall tramping about overhead, Mrs. Mallinson's loud, harsh voice sounding up the stairs, sometimes calling to Sarah Matilda, sometimes scolding the servant, sometimes uplifted in vehement expositions for the benefit of Mr. Barton, who still came in on a Saturday evening as heretofore, though Mrs. Mallinson was more and more impressed with the advisability of a change in the Grosmont Road ministry; he being quite too much given to the practical enforcements for her views.

And there was a great soreness at Mrs. Deeping's heart, for she feared lest the lad should die, and give no sign of repentance for all the wild, reckless days he had spent. Mrs. Mallinson had told her all about them, softening down with no touch of motherly kindness the pain they caused; never cheering her by saying how steady he had been before that fatal change came over him, nor even how, when his folly was at its height, some little touch of goodness mingled with it. For Hugh had never been wholly bad. God had never let him quite forget the passing gleam of brightness which had once hallowed all his life. She only knew that he had been very wild, that he had sadly broken away from the old paths, that deep stains of guilt lay upon the heart which was once so trusting and innocent.

How she waited day after day for that returning gleam of consciousness which would not come! How she prayed that some word of pardon might reach him before he went away; that the Good Shepherd, whose love never wearies, whose patience never fails, would seek this poor wandering soul, and lead it back again to the fold! Or, if he should die—and, indeed, as the doctor said, that seemed the most likely ending of all—if he should die before that closed gate of reason opened again, she hoped God would be merciful to him, and not reckon too harshly with him for a past in which, perhaps, there was more to pity than to blame. For the poor lad had been sorely tried. Not without temptation, whose force has many a time mastered older and stouter hearts than his, had he been driven out of the *right path, and then*—ah! the history of *many a blasted life might* tell how hard, once driven out of that path, it is to find the way home again. Surely God would be merciful to him and take into account, not only the evil he had fallen into, but that which he had struggled with, and perhaps tried so hard to conquer.

For Mrs. Deeping thought she understood now why he had been so wild. Hugh's delirium told her what he had very carefully concealed in all his letters home—how he had hoped and been disappointed, how he had trusted and been deceived, how he had tried to do his best and found himself doubted. The pride of those Lyneton people had spoiled his life. It was their doing that he lay so crushed and broken now. In his brave trustfulness, seeking for the love which he gave so freely, he had climbed too high, and this was his fall. She could understand now, how, ever impulsive and hasty, he had let himself drift away to ruin. He had his father's nature, quick and affectionate, but his father had never been tempted so. He had never been allured and then betrayed. The world had been kinder to him, it had not vexed and wounded him, nor given him half so bitter a cup as poor Hugh had been forced to drink.

And with all a mother's fondness she tried to excuse his reckless ways, even while she mourned over them; and with all a mother's faithful love she prayed for light and life to come back. And with a bitterness which only that love could measure, she thought of the woman whose pride had wrought such mischief, whose cold, white hand it was that had thrust her poor boy down into this dark pitfall. Cruel hand, though the blood that flowed in its blue veins was so noble; cruel pride, though worn with such a queenly grace. Quiet-tempered, Christian woman though she was, Mrs. Deeping felt that if ever Gwendoline Lyneton crossed her path, no thought of forbearance and professing duty, no remembrance of the charity which suffereth long and is kind, or even of that divine love which would teach those whom it has forgiven to forgive also, could keep her from pouring out all the pent-up bitterness of her soul.

And, as it chanced, that meeting was not far off. For the hunt ball was to take place in a fortnight, and Rose Beresford had written to her friend Miss Lyneton to ask if she would engage Mrs. Mallinson's rooms for one night. The woman, though commonplace to a distressing degree, and rather given to familiarity in her manners, had yet made them tolerably comfortable when they came to Oresbridge in March, and perhaps the young man who lodged with her permanently would not object to giving up his sitting-room for a few hours, as he had done before. Of course Mrs. Beresford would be very glad to make it up to him in some way, though really the inconvenience to himself was so very trifling, that it scarcely seemed worth while mentioning it at all. And perhaps Miss Lyneton would be kind enough to call as soon as she could, for the time was drawing near now, and if Mrs. Mallinson's rooms were engaged, there would be a difficulty in procuring others, the hunt ball being

so numerously attended by people from the county residences.

So one bright May morning Mrs. Mallinson's heart was gladdened, not certainly by the sight of the Lyneton Abbots family carriage, which had once before stopped at Canton House, but by an elegant pony-phaeton, almost as imposing as any family-carriage could be, drawn by a pair of spirited little steeds in silver-mounted harness, and tended by a foot-boy with no end of buttons all over his jacket; a general effect quite brilliant enough to make Mrs. Green's pale face grow paler still with envy, if she chanced to behold it from behind her coffee canisters, where she was generally standing on the lookout for customers, and also to notice the class of customers who came to Mrs. Mallinson's shop. Such mean curiosity, Mrs. Mallinson said, and a thing she should never condescend to, for she never troubled herself about Mrs. Green's customers, poor thing! and never made it her business to find out what class they belonged to. And it was only by the merest chance that she had heard that the Lyneton Abbots people sent there for their tea, out of pity, no doubt, for every body knew that a better article could be got from parties who had an extensive business —her husband, for instance—and could afford to give large orders to the travellers. But Mrs. Green had such very mean ways. Mrs. Mallinson didn't think there was another person in the street that had such mean ways as Mrs. Green.

Noiselessly enough the little ponies, Skip and Sam, sped over the littering of bark which had been laid for some distance in front of Canton House. Gwendoline never saw any thing of that kind without feeling saddened. It seemed to tell so silently of suffering—perhaps of death just passed, or very near at hand. But it was a sight painfully common in Oresbridge, where people were always falling ill, and where the race for riches, and all the tumult and excitement of competition, and the energy which must needs be put forth to secure any sort of standing-place, issued frequently enough in these nervous illnesses, where the patient had to be kept so very quiet. A hard thing to be gained, any thing like quiet, in Oresbridge, Gwendoline thought; for the stone pavement was so terribly noisy. It must be painfully trying, especially for sick people, to be so close upon it, and to hear continually the jar of those immense drays, rattling along with their burden of railway lines or iron bars, dashing against each other at every turn of the wheel. And she wondered what story that littered bark had to tell of anxiety and pain; what poor sufferer was lying near, needing to be so carefully guarded from the great town's noise and din.

Mrs. Mallinson, who had heard the muffled sound of wheels, followed by the little foot-boy's double knock, rushed to the door, and with a brisk succession of sniffs, and bows, and courte-
sies, ushered her visitor into the back parlor be-
hind the shop, where a quantity of snippings on
the carpet, and a smart red petticoat, half finished, hastily stuffed behind one of Sarah Matilda's antimacassars, betrayed that that young lady had been surprised in the midst of a diet of dress-making. And as ill-luck would have it, the front sitting-room was undergoing a process of cleaning, which rendered it unfit just then for the reception of so distinguished a visitor. So very unfortunate, as Mrs. Mallinson said when she heard the double knock, and caught sight of the silver-mounted harness, shining through the pickle jars in the shop window. But things always had happened unfortunately of late, she thought. And she apologized profusely to Miss Lyneton for having to bring her into the back parlor, where things were not so genteel as up stairs.

"So much extra work, you see, ma'am, when there's sickness in a house, and his mother come to nurse him, and the servant almost run off her feet with extra fires and bits and sups to be got ready at all times, just when he's a mind to have them. I'm sure such a thing as I've never had to do with since I was married, and if it wasn't for the good of the cause as me and my husband is looked up to to keep it going on prosperous, I wouldn't have been bothered with it, no, that I wouldn't."

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed, and threw up the window to air the room.

"But nothing catching, ma'am, so you needn't be afraid. I would have told you if it had been aught of that sort, before you'd come into the house, for I'm not one that would deceive people, nor ever was, I'm thankful to say. It's something in his head, ma'am, that's what it is, nothing no more than that; but he takes an awful deal of nursing, and so we had his mother sent for, as I might be free to attend to the family and outward calls of usefulness, which it isn't nobody's duty to neglect, unless Providence sees fit to indicate otherways."

Miss Lyneton expressed her regret that there should be illness in the house. Certainly it always did cause a great amount of extra anxiety, and she trusted that Mrs. Mallinson would soon be relieved from hers by the recovery of the patient. But there was not the least occasion for apology. She had merely called, by Mrs. Beresford's request, upon an errand which she now feared would be useless. Could that lady engage the rooms which she had for the county ball in March? If so, Mrs. Mallinson might consider them as taken, and upon the same terms as before, for the hunt ball, which was expected to take place at the end of May.

Mrs. Mallinson's regrets were loudly expressed. It was bad enough to have a sickness in the house, involving, as it did, extra fires, and all sorts of small disagreeablenesses; but for that sickness to be the means of depriving her of such a remunerative let as Mrs. Beresford's had been, was worse still. Ball company always paid so well. You might almost charge what you like to ball company, and they never seemed to think of making any complaint. It was grievous, it was provoking, it was to be looked upon in the light of a heavy Providential dis-

pensation. Not a judgment, nothing of that sort. Mrs. Mallinson was quite sure that neither she nor her husband had done any thing to call for a judgment, since they were using their best endeavors to uphold the cause, and Mr. Mallinson was coming forward with gold on every public occasion to an extent which certainly ought to place him beyond the reach of any thing but gracious dealings on the part of Providence. It was a dispensation; that was what it was, and a very unfortunate one, and Hugh's mother must be given to understand that it had prevented the rooms from being let to Mrs. Beresford for the hunt ball. Then Mrs. Mallinson went into particulars, for Miss Lyneton did not seem to understand as yet the precise aspect of the case; only that her errand was unsuccessful, on account of sickness in the house.

"It's Mr. Deeping, ma'am, the young man we've had to lodge with us since last October, as has been took with brain fever, or something of that kind, and laid at death's door this month past. And I'm sure I wish it would either open and let him in, and have done with it, or send a message out as he needn't to wait there any longer; for it's more than me and my husband ever looked for, is a visitation like this, and us not conducting ourselves in any shape or way whatever as seemed to need it; and his mother, too, to wait upon him, and extra fires, and no sort of certainty as to when he's going to have his food, or what he'll take a fancy to, and wasted as likely as not when its been took up to him, which I always say is a shame, and the price food is now, to have it sent out again that way. I thought you might have heard of it, ma'am, and him engaged at Lyneton Abbots, and it seemed to make a wonderful difference to him when he gived over coming of a Saturday afternoon. I always said to my husband it was the beginning of his ruin, his having them Saturday afternoons loose.

"Not but what Mr. Lyneton did perfectly right, ma'am," continued Mrs. Mallinson, thinking that perhaps this latter clause might be construed into a reflection upon Miss Lyneton's brother, which reflection was the very last thing she wished to make when that lady had come about the taking of the apartments. "Not but that Mr. Lyneton did perfectly right in not having him come no more, for he'd got that wild and reckless before he was took ill, as I don't believe he cared what he did, nor where he went; and I don't misdoubt but what it's for his good as this affliction has come upon him, though it goes hard as me and my husband should be saddled with it, that wasn't to blame for his going off that way. Because you see, ma'am, you can't make a charge for illness. It isn't a thing one can put down in the bill, along with coals, and gas, and extras, and so I say it will be a dead loss to us, which was what we hadn't looked for, and laying ourselves out as we did to support the cause, and be burning and shining lights in the congregation, which isn't done for nothing, as I'm sure me and my husband can both of us bear witness to; especially when a body hasn't got itself established, as one may say like the present instance, and wants so much keeping up with bazars, and teas, and public social means, as we're always looked to, to set an example with."

And Mrs. Mallinson, who, during the whole of this lengthy exposition of the state of affairs at Canton House, had been bustling round the back parlor, trying to touch it up into something like respectability, came to a pause now, as though expecting that Miss Lyneton should make some sort of reply.

CHAPTER XLVII.

But Miss Lyneton made no sort of reply. She just stood there by the seat Mrs. Mallinson had placed for her, stately, quiet as was her wont. Perhaps a few bitter thoughts were working their way into her heart. Perhaps she was wondering if those weary weeks of pain and anxiety which Hugh Deeping and his mother were measuring out would be laid to her charge, and ask their heavy price from her. Had she not had something to do with the shadow which lay upon him now? shadow which might be that of death. Her face was very pale; there was a look of fear in it.

Mrs. Mallinson thought it was because she had come unawares into a house where there was illness, and so she made haste to re-assure her.

"But it's nothing, ma'am, as I said before, that you need be afraid about, nothing catching, or aught of that sort, as I would have told you before ever you came in, if it had been, for I'm not a person that would take advantage of any body's ignorance, and bring them into danger. But you wouldn't believe me, ma'am, how he talks. He'll set on and keep at it for an hour together, all about Lyneton Abbots, and Miss Jeanie, as I say he would be downright ashamed of himself, if he had only sense enough to know what he was saying, and Mr. Lyneton the gentleman that he is, and a position that Mr. Deeping has no sort of right to aspire to. Not but what he always had a notion of holding himself very stiff, and never seemed to have any desire to be one of the family, as I'm sure I tried to make him, and always used to have him down here of a night for a bit of company for Sarah Matilda; as I say a gentleman *is* a bit of company of a night, if he tries to make himself agreeable, which Mr. Deeping never did."

Again Mrs. Mallinson paused for a reply. Again she got none. Only Miss Lyneton inclined her head slightly, as though quite assenting to the truth of what was said. And so the good lady continued—

"No, never since the very first night he come to the apartments. Just as if we wasn't good enough for him, and my husband doing as respectable a business as any in all Oresbridge, and keeping the best of articles, too,

ma'am, best superfine flour, from two shillings a stone, if you should wish a sample, ma'am, and the other qualities in proportion, markets being a little up now; and Westphalia hams cut at tenpence half-penny, and ninepence if you take them entire. And if his father was a minister among the Independents, and him sent to college before his mother was left a widow, why, that needn't make him hold himself up in that way, and refuse the friendship of the family of a night in the back parlor; for I always said, and always shall do, that the provision business is a long way before the ministry for laying by something comfortable against a person gets into years. And, besides, folks had ought to bring their minds to their circumstances, and if it's the will of Providence they're to go for clerks, they must act conformable to it, for it's agen' the Scripters entirely that a man should think of himself more highly than he ought to think; and me and my husband has always gone by the Scripters, and always mean to, for there isn't nothing else to be depended on, only a person understands them proper, which I've a gift for, and always had. Nothing comes amiss to me about doctrines. I can see 'em as clear as clear. My husband says it's a loss to the ministry I wasn't a man; and I don't know but what he's right, for I'm sure I could set out the views of the body to more advantage than what Mr. Barton does, who leans a great deal too much to practical enforcements, and that sort of thing, which isn't according to the feeling of the congregation.

"And you'll please to make my duty to the ladies, ma'am," continued Mrs. Mallinson, seeing that Miss Lyneton was moving toward the door, "and say as I would have done my best to have made them comfortable if we hadn't been exercised with affliction. And I hope they'll get suited somewhere else, but I wouldn't advise them going to Mrs. Green yonder on the other side the road, number ten, small grocer's shop, name over the door, cheap teas in the window, not to be depended on; because she isn't a person, poor thing! that knows how to do for ball company. Not that I would go to say any thing against her, for I'm not a person of that sort; but you see, ma'am, she hasn't accommodation proper for the quality, and without being accustomed to them, she don't know how to make herself agreeable, as them does that takes ball company regular. And I hope and trust, ma'am, as I shall be more fortunately situated another time, and perhaps you'll say as much to the ladies, and tell them the apartments will be quite at their service for the county ball another year.

"Here, Sarah Matilda!" and Mrs. Mallinson called to that young lady, who was peeping through the kitchen door, "come and show Miss Lyneton out at the front. I declare, this gown of mine isn't decent to go to the door. You see, *ma'am, where* there's sickness, and a cleaning *going on too, things has* to be let to go a little *more than usual."*

"Is that Miss Lyneton?" said a low, quiet voice.

And Gwendoline, turning, found herself face to face with a pale, thin, worn-looking woman in widow's weeds. A very worn-looking woman, and haggard too, as if with long watching and distress.

"You must come with me. I want you. I am Hugh Deeping's mother."

And she laid her hand upon Gwendoline's arm. Something in that touch, something in the woman's voice and manner, told the calm stately lady of Lyneton that she must obey.

Mrs. Deeping led her up stairs into the shabby-fine, cheaply-furnished room, where Hugh had been lying for more than a month, fighting hard with death; not conquered yet, though how the dear life kept itself in that poor wasted form, even his mother could scarcely tell. She pushed Gwendoline forward to the foot of the bed, still keeping hold of her arm, and said in a hoarse whisper—

"There, that is your work! I thought you had better see how well you have done it. He would not have lain there but for you."

Since Jeanie's mother died, many years ago, Miss Lyneton had never stood so near to death. But Jeanie's mother had never looked like this. She kept her own sweet smile to the last, and when they laid the shroud upon her it covered a face that did but seem to sleep, so calm it was, so quiet and at rest. But that which Gwendoline looked on now, was drawn with pain, and the wide-open eyes had a listless, vacant stare, as though the soul that should have looked through them was far away.

She drew back. She would have gone out of the room, but for the grasp laid so tightly upon her. Could it be the same Hugh Deeping that once sat with Jeanie and her father in the oriel-room, and read to them with such student ardor and delight those old poems which they loved so well? Had those poor hands, so wan and helpless now, worked for her father, worked faithfully for him too? Had that overwrought brain spent any of its strength for them? Had he done the best for them that he could, and had they rewarded him thus? For, strive against it as she would, she felt now that she had wronged him. Her own great grief had taught her to feel a little for his, even before she knew that he was suffering thus.

Mrs. Deeping let her look at him for awhile in silence. If the proud Miss Lyneton had a heart at all, it might feel a sight like that.

But Gwendoline did not tremble, she did not weep, and Hugh's mother thought she did not feel. For she stood there with bowed head, speaking not a word; with level lids drooping over the great gray eyes to which the dew of tears so seldom came.

"Yes," Mrs. Deeping said, "that is your work. He left me eight little months ago, my darling and my pride, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Now he is dying, and you have killed him. He toiled very hard

for you, and this is his reward! What was this beautiful niece of yours, that an honest man might not dare to love her? Is an ancient name and a high descent better than a willing heart and a strong right hand? Did your noble blood give you any right to trample on my boy, and crush the life out of him, and leave him there, a poor pale thing, for me to bury out of my sight, because your niece's dainty hand must not be soiled by touch of his? Speak, if you have a heart at all, and say if this is well!"

But Gwendoline Lyneton never spoke. Her strength was to be silent then; silent while Hugh's mother heaped more and bitter words upon her.

"Tell that fair niece of yours that he will never trouble her again. Tell her, when he lies in his grave, that her false smile drove him there; and then let her go and smile upon others, to curse them too. And some day you may love, and the man you love may despise you as you have despised my boy; and when you sit alone, weeping in your pain, you may remember that the measure you once meted out to others has been meted to you again, pressed down and crushed together, and running over. And none will comfort you then, and none will pray for you when you mourn over your dying hope, as I mourn over him. There, go! If you had any tears you might weep them now. But you are hard, you can not feel!"

Mrs. Deeping released her hold, and Gwendoline Lyneton, pale, quiet as ever, went down stairs, bowing with lofty courtesy to Sarah Matilda, who held the door open for her, and stood there looking on while the little foot-boy arranged his lady's dress, and covered her with the costly tiger-skin rug, whose golden streaks shone so brightly against the silver-mounted harness.

Mrs. Mallinson, who was also looking on from one of the top windows, hoped Mrs. Green was at her shop door to see the sight. For a carriage gave such an air to a place. She never felt prouder of her position as mistress of Canton House, than when the carriage from Lyneton Abbots stopped there, even though it was not with a view to custom. And she was very glad that she had thought to mention about Mrs. Green not being a suitable person to take in ball company; for if she had not brought it forward, most likely Miss Lyneton would have gone there at once, seeing a paper in the shop-window of "Apartments to Let." And if one thing could vex her more than another, it would be that meek-faced widow woman getting Mrs. Beresford away from her.

Noiselessly again the little ponies sped over that littered bark, and then into the quiet Lyneton Abbots road, where the hawthorn was blooming so sweetly under the shelter of the great oak-trees, and white wind-flowers trembled with every touch of the May breeze, and the blackbirds were whistling in those maple-bushes as merrily as *though no sad heart could* ever be mocked by *song of theirs.* When they reached the Manor House Miss Lyneton went into her own room and wrote to her niece; and this was all she said—

"Jeanie, come home."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

But Jeanie was not at the grand house in Eaton Square when that letter of Gwendoline's reached it. Aunt Hildegarde had taken her, with a party of friends, Sir William and young Martin Allington among the number, for a trip to Paris, and thence up the Rhine, and the next intelligence that Miss Lyneton heard of her niece was that she had been exploring the beauties of Versailles in company with Martin and Miss Allington.

Aunt Hildegarde wrote a long letter from Paris, explaining the suddenness of their departure. Jeanie was not quite the thing, she said, a little too silent and quiet, though quite happy. Gwendoline must not think for a moment that the child was depressed or discontented, or any thing of that sort; on the contrary, she was perfectly sweet-tempered and gentle, and always acquiesced in any schemes of amusement that might be proposed, and occupied her spare time with books and work, and that sort of thing; but still Aunt Hildegarde must say that she should feel better satisfied if she could see her niece a shade more animated, just a shade more, that would have been quite enough. And so, under these circumstances, she thought a trip to Paris, and up the Rhine, would be beneficial to her, especially with such company as Sir William and his nephew, and Miss Allington, who was a charming girl, so bright and affectionate, and so devoted to Jeanie, whom she seemed already to look upon quite in the light of a sister. And Sir William had seemed so anxious for them to go, and really it was so seldom that one had the opportunity of making an excursion of that sort in such pleasant company, that she was sure Mr. Lyneton would not think she had done wrong in taking Jeanie away without writing to ask his formal permission.

Furthermore, Aunt Hildegarde said that as they were only going to be away a fortnight—Jeanie might perhaps go up the Rhine under even more favorable auspices before long—they had given directions that their letters were not to be sent forward. They were going to Cologne next day, and thence to other places of interest in the neighborhood; they hoped, also, to visit Rheims, and some of the more famous Continental cathedrals, before their return; for Sir William was such an intelligent guide, and knew all about the symbolism of church architecture, and could explain every thing so beautifully, that it seemed a pity not to take full advantage of his society. And she thought that after their return Jeanie might come home with perfect safety. It was her opinion that Gwendoline's fears were quite groundless now. For Jeanie

never mentioned Mr. Deeping's name, and if it was accidentally brought up in her hearing, she did not take any particular interest in it, or ask any questions about him. Aunt Hildegarde thought that, so far as that affair was concerned, her niece's visit had been perfectly successful. She only wished that the child would be a little more cordial in her manner to Mr. Allington, who was so very polite and attentive, so evidently wishful to secure a place in her affections, if she would but give him the opportunity of doing so. That, however, as she had said before, might be only shyness and girlish reserve, which was so very much better than a too eager acceptance of marked attentions, or a manifested preference, given before it had been formally demanded.

So they did go to Cologne, and various places of interest in the neighborhood, according to Aunt Hildegarde's programme, and then to Rheims, and some of the grand old Norman cathedrals, and home through the Isle of Wight, in one of whose sequestered dells young Martin took the opportunity of laying his heart and fortunes at Jeanie's feet, with what success need not here be chronicled. After which, unforeseen circumstances compelled his return to Barton Firs somewhat sooner than was expected, and the three Allingtons, baronet, niece, and nephew, parted company from their friends at Southampton, leaving Aunt Hildegarde, not in the best of tempers, to chaperon Jeanie back to London. Where they arrived at the end of May, a whole long fortnight after Miss Lyneton's brief recall had been sent to her niece.

Life had gone on quietly as usual at Lyneton Abbots, during that time. The chief event which varied its even current was a letter from Major Demeron to Mr. Lyneton. He hoped to come over and spend a day or two with them during the shooting season. His leave of absence had been unexpectedly lengthened out until November, in consequence of some alterations that were being made in the barracks where his regiment was stationed, and he felt that he could not remain so much longer in the country without calling once more to see his old friends at the Manor House. He did not write very brightly. There was nothing in his letter of that gay nonchalance which he had worn so gracefully when he took his leave of them three months ago. Instead, there was a perceptible tone of sadness, almost discontent, which even Mr. Lyneton perceived. But then, as he said, after he had read the letter, a man can scarcely revisit his native land, the home of his early memories, after five years' absence, without finding much to sadden and depress him. Many a name which was once dear to him would be graven on marble head-stone now; many a fireside place vacant which once a cherished friend had filled. Mr. Lyneton could quite understand *how Major Demeron, writing from his childhood's home after so many years of parting from it, should feel a shadow almost like the shadow of death resting upon him.*

There was no need for Gwendoline to take care of that letter, as she had done of the last that Maurice Demeron sent, more than a year ago; no need to search in it for any sweet undermeaning, hidden from all eyes but her own. This was a letter of friendship, nothing more. And he was to come to them again in October, on his way to London, where Rose Beresford and her mother would be staying then. October, the month when he was expected to land in England. How, through all the dreary winter days she had looked forward to that month. How joyfully she had watched the little buds come out upon the elm-trees, knowing that before the autumn sunlight tipped them with gold Maurice would be home. Well, they *had* unfolded all their green beauty now, and the autumn sunlight would gild them by and by, and Maurice Demeron would come when they began to fall. Only the coming would be different.

There need be no constraint between them this time, no half-unacknowledged doubt, no weary waiting for the words that had been left unsaid so long. No need for maidenly reserve, lest any chance allusion should bring back the memories of the old days, and call up within his heart associations of which it was not her place to remind him. She had been very silent before. Almost as friends shrink from speaking the name of the newly dead to one who mourns his loss, she had shrunk from the lightest word which might win his thoughts to a past so sacred. Now, there was no need for fear. No reserve of hers need vex him any more. The old bright friendliness might be bidden back again, if it would come; the free, unrestrained intercourse of those first few days, when as yet they had never looked into each other's eyes with that strange conscious glance in which soul touches soul, or clasped each other's hands for more than courteous meeting and farewell.

Instead of dying, as every one expected he would, Hugh Deeping "took a turn," as Mrs. Mallinson expressed it, and began to recover. Then the worthy doctor talked about tonics, and plenty of support, and keeping up the tone, and bracing the system; with other professional phrases which have such a pleasant sound in them, telling as they do of danger overpast, and hand to hand strife with death changed for the sweet cherishing of life. After that he recommended his patient to be taken into the country for change of air, and Mrs. Mallinson briskly seconded the motion. It was a long time since she had given so hearty a sniff of approbation to any proposal that did not originate with herself. For really, as she said, she was quite tired of having an affliction in the house, and extra fires, and perpetual cooking of bits and sups without any regard to regular meal-times; and Mrs. Deeping, too, moving about the place just like a ghost, with such a set, desperate look upon her face, just such as she might have had if some one had been doing her a deadly injury. Though why she should feel herself

called upon to look in that way, Mrs. Mallinson could not imagine, for she was sure she and her husband had done all that professing persons could be expected to do, in the way of being resigned to the affliction, and the first time Mr. Deeping thought he could fancy a cup of tea, Mr. Mallinson had let his mother have a quarter of a pound of the very best quality in the shop at trade price, and the same with the biscuits when he thought he could eat a few, so that there was no reason for a look of that kind on their account. And for her part she thought Mrs. Deeping ought to feel herself drawn out in humble thankfulness for the unexpected change in her son's condition, being brought up, as she might say, from the very jaws of death, instead of flying in the face of Providence with a look like that, so ungrateful for benefits received. But some people *were* ungrateful. That was just what some people were; even people from whom, on account of their connection with the Church, and their deceased husbands having been ministers, and all that sort of thing, you might have expected better behavior.

Then Mrs. Mallinson said her prayers and thanked Providence that she was not as other women were.

So that it was a wonderful relief to her when the doctor gave it as his opinion that Mr. Deeping might be moved. And she had herself taken the trouble to go all the way to the village of Lyneton Abbots, that being the nearest country place, and well situated for healthfulness, and had hunted up a pleasant cottage, where Mrs. Deeping could have two rooms on the ground-floor, and a chamber for herself up stairs. Delightful rooms, looking out upon the village green on one side, and on the back, into a garden with the Abbot's brook running at the bottom; really such a suitable place that one might almost wish to be an invalid one's self, to be taken there.

His mother had said something about keeping him at Canton House until he was well enough to be taken home to Jersey, but Mrs. Mallinson knew better than that. Jersey! why, he would have to stop a month longer before he could take a journey like that, and she had had more than enough of it already. She wanted to get the house cleaned down, and swept out, and fumigated, and the ceilings washed, and the best rooms re-papered, and a coat of paint put on, and things got a little into trim, against Sarah Matilda's wedding, which was to take place early in autumn. And when the thick of the cleaning was done, she must give her mind to the dress-making, and the details of the ceremony, for she meant it to be such a wedding as did not take place every day in Grosmont Road Chapel. No; she was going to have no dawdling about until such time as the young man could manage a journey right away to the far end of the kingdom. They must both of them move out of the house as *soon as ever the doctor said* he was fit to be put *into a cab and walked very* gently down to the lodgings which she had taken for him at Lyneton Abbots.

Which desirable state of convalescence was reached toward the end of May, when the old Manor House was looking its loveliest, when the chestnut-trees in the Rectory garden were just one sheet of snowy blossom, and the village green was strewed with the pale flowers of the sycamore, rare and dainty enough for a bride's little foot to turn aside.

But poor Hugh did not care much for their beauty, as, propped up with pillows, and guarded like a baby from even the sweet May breeze with rugs, and blankets, and comforters, his mother brought him to the little cottage at the corner of the green; the corner furthest away from the church-yard and the old house at Lyneton Abbots. Indeed, one could only know that there was a house there at all by the shadow which its gables cast across the road at some times of the day. The church and the row of yew-trees hid all the rest. Mrs. Deeping was glad of that. She did not want him to be vexed with any memories which the sight of the old Manor House might bring back. She wanted him to forget that he had ever had a welcome to its fireside, or that the pride of the people there had so greatly marred his life, or that the love of one of them had cast a passing brightness upon it. As if there could ever be any forgetting of that!

Truly, it was a pleasant resting-place in early summer-time, that little cottage, whose parlor window opened through lattice-work of vine-leaves into a garden crowded with old-fashioned English flowers, roses, pinks, marigolds, lavender-bushes, and great beds of sweet-william and yellow wall-flower, which scented all the air as soon as twilight began to fall. Not far off a shallow brook told its little story to the flag-leaves and forget-me-nots which grew upon its banks; told it with many a flash and sparkle as it hurried over the shining gravel, and then away past meadow and hedge-side to the great Oresbridge river, where its silver speech was silenced, and its merry sparkle quenched, and where, instead of singing to the forget-me-nots and flag-leaves, it must needs help to bear many a tall-masted vessel and laden bark, and have many a stain upon its whiteness before it found rest at last in the wide ocean.

After awhile it told its little story to Hugh Deeping, too, when he got strong enough to lie upon the sofa by the open window and listen, half sleeping, half waking, to the pleasant murmuring sound. And his mother would sit by him, pleased to see how the worn lines of pain were gradually smoothing out from his face; and her own grew calm again as she thought of coming days, when he, hale and strong once more, should watch her as tenderly, though not so anxiously, as now she watched him.

But through all those bright summer days of returning life and health, they neither of them spoke of Miss Lyneton, nor of Jeanie; nor did Mrs. Deeping ever ask more of him than he had

unwittingly told her in that long, dreary illness. Perhaps when he got quite well again he would tell her all. She could wait.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Hugh and his mother had been three weeks at the cottage, long enough for a faint tint of health to have come back to those pale cheeks, and a little of the former cheerfulness to the voice which used to be so very weak and feeble. Mrs. Deeping even began to make arrangements for the time, not very distant now, she hoped, when he would be able to take the whole journey home to Jersey. And when he once got to Jersey, she was quite sure the pleasant sea-breeze, and his sister's company, and all the tender care which they would both be able to give him, would soon build him up again, make a man of him, make him just as bright, and buoyant, and cheerful as he used to be, years ago, in those old college days.

But Hugh would never again be just what he used to be in those old college days. The man who has been mistrusted and misunderstood, the man who has erred deeply, and repented bitterly, never comes back—sad indeed for him if he could—to the unthinking brightness of the time when he knew not of any of these things. His sorrow, his error, and his repentance shall lead him through the gate of God's sweet forgiveness, into a better country, even a heavenly, where the untried, and therefore so dauntless daring of earlier years is changed into the steadfast, abiding confidence of the man, who, strong in his humility, and bold only in a higher courage than his own, learns to bear patiently the toils and difficulties of the way. He is content to leave behind him life's young joyfulness, for the faith which is made perfect through suffering, and its boastful pride for the more excellent charity which vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up.

These three months past had done for Hugh Deeping the work of years. He had lived a long life-time in the tumult and suffering which they had wrought. There had been the earthquake, the whirlwind, and the fire; now he listened, reverently and in silence, to the still, small voice, a voice so still that they who would hear it must listen in the calm of a forgiven heart, a heart at leisure from itself; at leisure, too, from passion, and selfishness, and pride. Which his had not been until now.

He was not to go back to Oresbridge any more. Even if Mr. Feverige had not supplied his place with a fresh "hand," the doctor said that he would no longer be able to bear the strain of continual employment at the Bellona works, in the stifling atmosphere of that little counting-house, amid the din of the hammer, the roar of the furnaces, and the clamor of two hundred workmen. He must seek some lighter employment, the doctor said, something which, if no so remunerative, would tax his brain less heavily. It was a pity he should be obliged to turn away from such a fine opening, for, as every body knew, there was nothing like iron for establishing a young man in the world. Oresbridge could count its metal princes now by hundreds, men of weight, and mark, and respectability in the place, who had begun the world with nothing but steadiness—the doctor emphasized that word very strongly—with *steadiness* and so much a week in an iron work. If a young man was only steady, he might do almost any thing in a place like Oresbridge. But health was the first consideration, and if Hugh valued his health, he must go back no more to the Bellona iron works.

So the worthy doctor said, at the close of one of those professional visits which he was still obliged to pay very frequently to the little cottage at Lyneton Abbots. And Hugh listened quietly, not so much disappointed as his medical attendant thought he would have been, by this overclouding of his worldly prospects. He had talked these things over with his mother as soon as he was able to think clearly about any thing, and had laid out fresh plans for the future. His first dream was to come true after all. He was to tread in his father's steps, and do the work his father had done, and perhaps by and by win for himself the place which his father had so earnestly coveted for him. For the old uncle's legacy, coming just when it did, would enable him to return to college, and afterward to study in Germany for two years, before coming home to enter upon his work. Hugh felt that he had something to say to his fellow-men now, which he could never have told them before. Not for fame nor position nor power any longer, would he seek the holy office of a teacher; but that, having become wise through his own sufferings, others might learn from him that wisdom; that, warning them from the rocks on which his own little bark had been so nearly wrecked, he might lead them into that haven of trust where he had found rest at last. It was a noble life to ennoble the lives of others. It was a bright hope to be able to rouse them to think, and strive, and endure.

Only there was no longer now that other hope which had once made even this seem so much brighter. He would have to do his work alone, and take any joy or suffer any weariness it might bring, by himself. There would be no bidding back again now of the light which had once brightened his life. He had given what he could never give again with just so much freshness and entireness. His was a nature that must ever have something to love, something on which to spend its warm overflow of affection. He could never live alone, as some men do, enough for himself, proudly independent of sympathy and companionship. But also, he could never live now so perfect a life, so full rounded in its happiness, as he could if Jeanie had been true to him. All other love which he might give would be only a shadow of this, his first and best.

For in June mornings, when the sun shone very bright, and he could bear to feel the warm wind playing round him, Hugh would creep out int

the little front garden of the cottage, supporting himself upon the wicket-gate which opened out into the village green. And there he could see the shadow of the old house at Lyneton Abbots—the shadow of its tall, pointed gables lying over the road, and he could hear the noisy chirp of the sparrows which fluttered in the gables, and the cawing of the rooks in the tall elm-trees which sheltered them. And at evening-time, when the sun had made a golden glory in the west, he knew that the tower of St. Hilda's Church was darkening the room where, long ago, Jeanie used to sit, thinking of him.

But where was Jeanie now, and did she any longer think of him? And did she know that he had been so near death? And did she know, or did she care to know, how life had changed for him, and how the work which once he sought so eagerly, because doing it he might win a better place for her, had been given to him again now that she wished no more to share it with him?

These thoughts stole into Hugh Deeping's heart and made it sad as he stood in the sunny June mornings by that little wicket-gate, looking away past the church-yard yew-trees which held out their gnarled branches, hale and strong now, as they had been when the old Lyneton knights fought for Prince Charlie, or when the Lady Gwendoline de Lyneton, Queen Catharine's favorite maiden, had passed beneath them to her bridal in St. Hilda's Church; hiding beneath coif and veil a face as fair, though not so grave, as the lady's who bore her name to-day.

Mrs. Deeping had never told her son of that visit of Gwendoline Lyneton's to the house in Grosmont Road, nor how bitterly she, the meek widow-mother, stung to anger by all the wrong that had been done him, had spoken to the stately mistress of Lyneton Abbots. That name was kept very silent between them. Hugh's mother did not know why in the warm noontime he would stand there, leaning on the wicket-gate. She thought it was only because the sunshine fell more warmly and balmily there that he loved to stand and feel it. She never passed the old house herself without a sad, resentful pain, a feeling of impotent bitterness against the people who had put so deep a stain into her son's life. And when on Sunday at the little village chapel the minister prayed—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," she bowed her head and felt that it would indeed go hardly with her if such measure as she meted to others, and only that, were measured to her again.

But her boy Hugh had once been so bright and happy, the very sunshine of her home; and now he was so changed. She almost thought sometimes that he would never win back the old cheerfulness, that she should never hear his merry laugh ring out again as it used to ring out when he was a lad at home. And all for pride of theirs. All because their name was so very noble *that no touch of his must* come near it.

That was the reason why Mrs. Deeping would fain leave the pretty village and go back to Jersey again. That was why she waited so anxiously for Hugh's returning strength, and watched with such eager eyes for the slowly-reviving light in his, and listened with such quick ear to note how his step grew firmer as he paced about in the little garden. She wanted him home, quite away from every thing that might remind him of the friendship which had cost him so dear. She thought he would forget then, and be himself again.

But Hugh never would forget; and the name so carefully unspoken between them was only living on in his thoughts the more vividly for that very silence.

And so the June days passed slowly by, each one waking some new flower, touching into deeper green the long tresses of the birch-trees, giving a wilder wealth of perfume to the roses which clambered over the cottage door, and kissing into fairer bloom the white lilies that rocked so sleepily to and fro beneath the fountain urn in the old garden at Lyneton Abbots. And still Hugh kept getting stronger. He might soon go home. Only another week now, the doctor said, and he would be able to bear the journey; only a week and then many a mile, yes, even the deep ocean itself, should lie between him and this, the place where he had been so cruelly wronged.

He had lain down for his afternoon rest in the cottage parlor, and Mrs. Deeping, fearful of disturbing him, took her sewing-work into the trellised porch, where, as she busied herself with it and with loving thoughts for him, she might look up from time to time and watch the merry sunshine flickering through the vine-leaves overhead, or see it lying on the church-yard graves—those graves which, thank God! held no child of hers beneath their daisied mounds. Hugh would not need a resting-place there now.

And yet it was a sweet spot to rest in. It reminded her of the quiet grave-yard, far away among the Westmoreland lakes, where her husband lay buried, the flowers scarce grown around him yet. Just so warmly the sunshine would be falling there now. Just so silently as it crept over the trunks of these old yew-trees, would it be creeping over the broken column which had been put upon his grave. It was nearly a year now since he died, for the July flowers were at their brightest on his funeral day. Nearly a year of sadness and widowhood, pitifully different to the bright years which had gone before it, when she had felt so sheltered by her husband's love, so proud of the respect that people gave to him; when she used to look forward so confidently to coming years, hoping to see their boy tread in his father's steps, and do his father's work when they were both of them old and feeble. Perhaps he might labor among his father's own people, never leave them at all, except for his college years; and she and her husband would listen to him with loving pride, not untouched with thankfulness that he, their only boy, was living so worthy a life, and

repaying so well the years of care which had been spent upon him.

Sad yet tender thoughts, which brought a mist of tears into the widowed mother's eyes, and caused the sewing-work to lie all unheeded in her lap as she sat there in the little vine-covered porch, looking out upon St. Hilda's church-yard, every thing around her so hushed and peaceful.

The sound of the church-yard gate, gently opened, roused her from her reverie. Some one was coming across the green toward the cottage. Not Mrs. Stenson, the woman of the house, a bustling, good-hearted farmer's wife, who had that morning gone to Oresbridge market with her basket of eggs, and must soon be returning now, to be ready for her good man's dinner. This was a young girl, whose step, as she neared the wicket-gate, was scarcely heard upon the mossy path. A quiet, thoughtful-looking girl, simply dressed, yet with a nobleness in her very simplicity which stamped her plainly enough as belonging to what the village people termed "the quality." Quite different from Sarah Matilda Mallinson, who, resplendent in inumerable flounces, and a pork-pie hat, and almost an entire pheasant on the top of it, had rattled up the path a few days before with her "ma's" compliments, and they hoped Mr. Deeping was going on well. Very different, also, from Miss Stenson, the farmer's daughter, a rosy-faced lass, with more than Dutch substantiality of foot and ankle, who used always to be singing barrel-organ tunes when about her work, to the great detriment of Hugh's afternoon slumbers. This young girl came up the walk with a step as gentle as Mrs. Deeping's own, when tending the lightest of those slumbers; so gentle that she did not even, with instinctive vigilance, turn toward the open door of the room where her son lay, to listen for the movement which might tell it had disturbed him.

"Is this the cottage where Mr. Deeping is staying?"

Her voice was low and soft, and there was just the slightest touch of fear in it.

"Yes; my son has been here for some weeks."

The girl's face flushed a little, a very little, as she lifted her calm eyes to Mrs. Deeping's face.

"I am Jeanie Lyneton."

That was all. No further question or explanation, only that straightforward look, that look of unchanging truthfulness, which seemed to tell that whatever might once have been in her heart of love and trust, was there still. Meeting that look, almost awed before its grand purity, Mrs. Deeping felt that no words of hers, words of bitterness or reproach, were needed. Gazing into that young face, so grave and pale now, so patient beyond its years with the patience that long trial teaches; reading with a woman's quick instinct the unspoken story there of other suffering than Hugh's, of other steadfastness and endurance than his, the tears overflowed her eyes. *Whatever had to be forgiven* was not to be forgiven to this young girl.

She put her work aside, and without another word led Jeanie into the little parlor, where Hugh lay asleep. Then closing the door after her, she left them there. She knew he would not wake too soon now.

CHAPTER L.

JEANIE never knew how long she waited there, for her heart was full of that quiet content which does not take much count of time.

The hours had seemed to weary on slowly enough a week or two ago, when she had been sailing up the castled Rhine, listening to Martin Allington's complimentary speeches, or Sir William's elaborate descriptions of the scenery. Sir William was quite like a walking guide-book for Germany and the Rhine. He had been there so often that he knew every tumble-down castle that reared its gray turrets on the rocky banks, and could fit to each its own particular legend of doughty knight and captive maiden, as the case might be. Fine legends, too, and poetical enough, if only he had not told them with such very mechanical accuracy, never changing his voice when the sad part of the story came, or firing up into any thing like animation when the captive maiden was released and carried off in triumph by her faithful knight. Yet not so beautiful or graceful as others which Jeanie had listened to in the oriel-room of the old house at Lyneton Abbots; quaint, sweet English legends, which told of honor as unstained and courage as lofty as any whose memory those ancient Rhine castles held.

And Sir William knew all about the black old Norman cathedrals, too; could tell the date of every door-way and canopied niche, could explain all the imagery and symbolism which was hidden away among those grim gargoyles and writhing, contorted faces that peeped down from beneath crocketed spire or richly-foliated capital. And he could repeat, also, with grave, mechanical accuracy, the stories of the saints and martyrs, whose sweet, calm faces the sunlight shone upon in many a stained window. Though Jeanie wished sometimes he would let those faces tell their own story, and not spoil with tedious historical detail the holy stillness which seemed to brood upon her when she looked up at them, standing there with folded hands and crowned brows, and ungirded robes full flowing to their feet, because now all their work was done. Would her mother's face wear a smile like theirs, when she first looked upon it among the shining angels? And would her own win so grand a peace when all the waiting and suffering of life were passed? For Jeanie knew a little of life's suffering now, though she hid it so quietly away.

So the hours wearied on even there, among the old Norman cathedrals, spite of all Martin Allington's complimentary speeches, and Sir William's elaborate descriptions of ecclesiastical symbolism. And they had wearied on too,

slowly enough, amid the light and glare and perfume of London drawing-rooms, where she had been forced to sit through many a long evening, listening to the chit-chat of fashionable society, or to walk through stately quadrilles with fine London gentlemen, and belles of ten seasons old, whose smiles were as artificial as the flowers in their hair. But the hours did not weary on here in this little cottage parlor, whose one small latticed-window looked out into an old-fashioned garden, where robins were chirping in the lilac-bushes, and the drowsy bees were humming over beds of purple columbine and red sweet-williams. This little cottage parlor, where Hugh Deeping lay asleep, not knowing she was so near him. Hugh Deeping, who had never written to her, or taken any notice of her since she went away; of whom she had never heard through all that long time, except that he was getting very wild. Aunt Hildegarde had told her that, with a great deal of other Oresbridge gossip, not long after she went to London.

He did not look as if he had ever been very wild, lying there now quiet as a little child, with almost a child's smile upon his face; thin, too, and with such dark shadows under his eyes. Aunt Lyneton had told her all about how ill he had been, how very near death; and how his mother had been sent for all the way from Jersey to nurse him; and how, as soon as he was strong enough to bear the journey, he was to be taken home, where he might have to stay many months before he was able to do any thing again. But when she spoke about him, there had not been that cold, proud look in her face that Jeanie remembered there four months ago, when they met him in the Lyneton Abbots road, just before she went away to London.

Jeanie knew why she had gone away at all; because her father and Aunt Lyneton were afraid that she and Hugh Deeping were growing to care for each other, and he was not good enough for her. As if Hugh's knowledge and culture, and those years of college life in which he had learned so much, did not make him good enough for any one in the land. As if to know all about those old Greek and Latin poets, and to have a mind stored with the grand thoughts of men whose names England is so proud of, and to be working too, honestly and steadily, to make himself a useful standing-place in the world, was not more honorable than living on expectations, like young Mr. Allington, and sauntering idly through a college course, and then lounging into the Church, not because he cared any thing about the saving of souls, but because his uncle had a good living ready for him, and a nice roomy rectory in the midst of a fine hunting country.

Yes, she knew why she had been sent away, but not why her aunt had called her home again; nor why, when she had come home, instead of banishing Hugh's name from their conversation, *or mentioning it only* with haughty *constraint, her aunt had spoken* of him tenderly, forgivingly, and had even bidden her go to the cottage and say good-bye to him before he went away to Jersey.

Only bidden her say good-bye to him. But as Miss Lyneton bade her do that, there was a strange new softness in her voice, a look in those great quiet gray eyes of hers, which told, more plainly than any words could have spoken, that she knew all, that she had forgiven all; that any barrier which might have parted between them was broken down now, and that their hands might clasp again, not with new trust, for Jeanie had never doubted him, but in a clasp which neither rank nor pride should have power to put asunder any more.

This Jeanie knew, but not how it had all been wrought; not what bitter strife had been overpast, what bitter sorrow met and conquered, before Gwendoline Lyneton learned that there are other things in life more noble than ancient name and high descent; that these do not always bring the faithful heart and the unstained honor which lowly birth can hold as well.

A little robin that had been carolling on a vine branch outside the window, treated his companions to a roulade of unusual brilliance just then, and woke Hugh Deeping from his sleep. Jeanie was standing by him, just as he had seen her, years and years ago, it seemed to him, standing in the March twilight, by the door-way of the old house at Lyneton Abbots; just as he had seen her many and many a time since then in dreams. Was this a dream, too? Would she turn away those quiet, trustful eyes, and glide from him, leaving only a track of brightness where she had stood? Would that world of sleeping fancies fade out, for the poor dim life of patient waiting which lay before him now?

No, this was no dream. For by and by he felt the touch of Jeanie's hand upon his own.

"Aunt Lyneton said I was to come."

The little robin had it all his own way after that, for the rest was told in a happy silence sweeter far than words.

CHAPTER LI.

Hugh made haste to get well after that beautiful waking, and by the middle of July he was able to go back to Jersey, there to gather up as much strength as would carry him through the remaining years of his college course.

But he had one quiet evening at Lyneton Abbots before he went away; a quiet evening with Jeanie's father in the library, that old oak-wainscoted library, where in months past he had spent so many busy Saturday afternoons. Busy and profitable, too, for it was chiefly owing to his diligent care that the estate was so much better managed now, and that it seemed likely before long to be self-supporting, and even re-

munerative. But there were no estimates and balance-sheets brought out this time, and the only plans talked over were those of Hugh's future life, a life which had indeed got back much more than all its former promise now, a life which he hoped ere long to make so noble and worthy that even Gwendoline Lyneton's niece need not stoop down very far to share it with him.

Afterward, there was a ramble with Jeanie in the old-fashioned garden, up and down beneath the shelter of that mouldering wall over whose lichen-stained copings the vine had spread such rich garniture of leaf and tendril. And there Hugh told her of all his life during those five months past, not hiding from her any of its folly or recklessness; telling her, too, of the wisdom which suffering had brought, and of the patience which came to him when hope had gone. But there was no look of chiding in Jeanie's face as she listened.

So they bade each other farewell under the old stone gate-way, and parted, he for his years of hard study in that German University, where among grave philosophers and professors he was to lay the foundation of learning and experience on which afterward such a fair structure should be raised; she to her life of quiet trust and waiting at home, a life through which the thought of Hugh and the love of him should flow like a hidden brook through woods, itself unseen yet ever singing its own sweet music, and refreshing with its cool waters the sometimes thirsty flowers which bent over it.

Perhaps Gwendoline, seeing them from the oriel-window, where she sat reading to her brother, might be reminded of another parting on another July night, when the stars glimmered out as now through the gray gloom of coming night, and the red light of the Oresbridge furnaces glowed on the eastern sky, telling its fiery story of toil and labor, and she and Maurice Demeron had stood by the stone gate-way, saying a good-bye to each other which would last for five long years. Those years were over now. Maurice had come home again, and yet they were further from each other, how much further, than when first the wide sea lay between them. She had kept her word faithfully enough. Who ever trusted a Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots, and found that trust betrayed? If he had been as true!

But Gwendoline never spoke of these things. The heavy price that her love and pride exacted was paid in silence. It was no weakness of the Lyneton people to talk of their troubles, to ask much help or pity from those who would perhaps willingly have given both. And no one could tell, from word or look of theirs, that they needed either. Like the gently-sloping fields and valleys around their own ancestral acres, whose vesture, now of waving meadow-grass and many-colored flowers, told no story of the mining work beneath, of all the human life and labor spent there in gloom to which no dawn of day-light ever came; so the pride of the old Lyneton race covered with its moveless, stately calm an under-life of great care and pain, a life which had sore need of patience sometimes, and into which there came but little light.

Yet there was no bitterness in Gwendoline's thoughts. Her kindness did not change to hate and scorn when it had been so poorly paid. What the Lynetons gave they gave right royally, never asking it again. She would return to Maurice Demeron calmly enough the gift he had repented of bestowing, but she would not take back her own. She would never think other than kindly of the man who had once been worthy of so much. She would have robbed herself, even yet, to do him service. She would have laid down her own life to save his, for that was not the hardest thing he could ask from her. She might trust, and sadly have to take that trust back again, nothing being left for it to stay upon; but she would not love and take that back too. Once given, that was given always.

After Hugh's departure the summer wore itself slowly away. The village people lived their quiet life as heretofore. On Saturday afternoon, when the Oresbridge manufactories and iron works were shut up, little knots of pale-faced, stooping men might be seen wending their way along the Lyenton Abbots road, looking sometimes with a very longing, wistful look toward the cottage gardens, where the roses bloomed so cheerily, and the laden apple-trees stooped their golden clusters almost to the ground, and little children, with round, rosy faces, and bright eyes, tumbled about among the long grass, and made dandelion chains for their baby brothers and sisters. Some of these pale-faced men had little children too, but not with bright eyes and rosy cheeks, and instead of tumbling about among the long grass, and making dandelion chains, they toiled from morning to night in crowded manufactories, or labored patiently in deep mines, where the gloom of a perpetual twilight stunted their little limbs, and sucked the rosy blood from their faces, and dimmed the light in their eyes, and made them old and haggard long before their time. What had those little ashy-faced children done that the curse of life should fall upon them so early and so heavily, while these, with glad, upspringing joy, drew such freshness out of the long summer days?

It might be that thought which bent the brows of the Oresbridge workmen, and shone angrily through their eyes as they sauntered along in the sunshine under the Lyneton Abbots trees, looking so longingly into the cottage gardens when the roses bloomed, and the laden apple-trees dropped their yellow fruit into the tall, rank grass. For indeed it was a weary life that the little children lived in that great overcrowded town of Oresbridge, and short holiday could they snatch when the long day's toil was over, and scant measure was meted out to them of any gladness or mirth which should have belonged to the blessed season of youth.

And then a touch of decay began to pale the deep green of the woods, and the maple-leaves blushed crimson here and there, and the berries of the mountain-ash shone scarlet, like great bunches of coral, among the thinning leaves. And the trailing bramble branches were studded over with purple-black fruit, which tempted the children forth in many a laughing band, with tins and baskets to be filled from the copses round about Lyneton Abbots; for bramble season was ever such a joyous time among the village lads and lasses. Then, while the trees still kept reddening, and the chestnuts dropped full ripe among the withered last year's leaves, the sharp report of a gun echoing now and then through the woods, startling the cushat doves from their shady covers, told that October had come; that pleasantest month of all the year, as sportsmen call it, who love to see the red leaves fall, and the days shorten, and the delicate frost-breath whiten the grass at early morning-time, for then their turn has come, and whirring partridge and timid hare must look out for danger near at hand.

October, the month when Maurice Demeron was to run down for a day's shooting with Mr. Lyneton. It was such a splendid shooting country all round about the Lyneton Abbots woods, and over the moorland hills beyond; and Maurice was reckoning much of that day's pleasure, for he was a keen sportsman, and he longed to be once more off and away with gun and dogs and game-pouch among the purple heather, where, six years ago, he had spent some glorious days, before those other days of wilder Indian sport and adventure. So he wrote to say that he should come over from Oresbridge, on his way South, next week; come over just for one day, and then he was going up to London, to receive further instructions relative to his return in November, and also to see after a few of those innumerable commissions with which his friends in India had entrusted him. And then he desired his very kind remembrances to Miss Lyneton—it was always "Miss Lyneton" now,—and little Miss Jeanie, whom he could not yet think of, he said, except as a pretty child in short frocks and pinafores, greatly attached to sugar-plums, and insatiable in her appetite for fairy tales and ghost stories.

Next week; not very long to look forward to. This was just about the time that they had expected him back again from India, if he had returned according to the first arrangement. Gwendoline remembered last autumn, when the leaves began to turn, how she had watched them fall from the tall elm-tree at the corner of the house, thinking, with such a glad, bright thrill of hope, that before those great black branches were stripped again, Maurice Demeron would have come home, and her long years of waiting and suspense would be ended. They were ended now; rather sadly for her, but if well for him she could still be content.

She need not trouble herself very much about that *passing visit of his, next* week, though it was most likely the last they should have from him before he went away. There need be no painful consciousness now, no proud, half-shy reserve between them; no mute reminder by word or gesture of that unspoken bond which had been given so long ago. He was coming as a friend of her brother's, and as such she might receive him with only the grave, quiet courtesy which the Lynetons had used for so many generations past toward all who sought their hospitality, and which they would use still, so long as the old home could shelter a guest within its ivy-covered walls.

She must offer him her congratulations, too, this time, for was not the wedding to take place toward the end of next month, and had not Rose Beresford written Jeanie a very long letter only a few days ago, telling her all about the arrangements for the ceremony, and how the brides-maids were to be dressed, and what she was going to wear herself, and what beautiful presents she was bringing home with her from Ireland? Really her friends had been so kind, and had showered such lovely things upon her; jewelry almost more than she could count, and all sorts of pretty little knickknacks to scatter over her drawing-room out there in Bombay. And she had bought such a splendid outfit; such quantities of exquisite lace and muslin dresses; she never thought she should have been worth so many dresses at once, but of course her mamma wished her to have every thing that was proper, for a residence abroad was such a very different thing from the slow, dull life they had been leading lately, just staying a few weeks at one place, and a few at another, to suit Mrs. Beresford's health. Though of course she was the very last person in the world who ought to complain; because, if it had not been for her mamma hearing of the baths at Grantford, and wishing to try them for her nervous depression, they should never have come into the neighborhood of Oresbridge at all, and in that case they should not have attended the county ball, and she should not have seen dear Jeanie again, and renewed the acquaintance which had led to such unexpected results. And then Rose wound up her letter with a brilliant description of the Dublin gayeties, which, she thought, were quite equal to any thing she had ever been privileged to enjoy, even in London, during the height of the season. Such a delightful succession of balls, and concerts, and assemblies, and little quadrille parties in a quiet way, and musical evenings where the songs used to be given in character, almost like the opera. It was altogether a charming life. Rose was quite sure there was no place like Dublin for variety and enjoyment.

Gwendoline heard Jeanie read the letter, thinking meanwhile that if a nature like Rose Beresford's could content Maurice Demeron, his must have changed very much since those long past years, when she knew him so well, and trusted him so entirely. And she wondered if, when all this foam and froth of youthful gayety

had passed away, there would be found beneath it the clear, sweet wine of love, growing ever sweeter and clearer as the years went on.

Miss Lyneton need not have troubled herself with any such thoughts. Rose Beresford would never want that splendid Indian outfit of hers, whose exquisite muslin dresses, of all shades and fashions, were even now filling her heart with such satisfying delight. And whether or not the red wine of love brimmed under the froth of girlish excitement, mattered little to Maurice Demeron, for he would never need to stoop his lips to it any more.

CHAPTER LII.

The ninth of October came, and with it Maurice Demeron, fully equipped for a day's shooting over the moors of Lyneton Abbots. Could he have stolen in quietly, under cover of night, and looked, unobserved himself, through that little uncurtained window in the ivied recess, he would have seen no shade of scorn this time on Gwendoline Lyneton's face, no angry light gleaming out from under those straight brows, no touch of cold determination stealing away the smile from her lips, and stiffening them into such harsh, unlovely lines. Instead, he would have seen a strange, new look of conquered pride, an almost gentle content, which lay upon her face like light on a summer landscape when the evening sun is low, softening it into such tender beauty that one can no longer grieve for the glory of noontide past.

But Major Demeron did not steal in unnoticed this time. There was no need to gird himself up for the unexpected meeting, to loiter in the shadow of the old many-gabled house, trying to bring back the memories that had already lost their power to charm. He arrived with all due notice, and was met at the Oresbridge station by the Lyneton Abbots foot-boy, with those same little ponies, Skip and Sam, whose shining silver-mounted harness, together with the elegant equipage to which they belonged, had caused Mrs. Mallinson's heart to beat with such proud satisfaction as she beheld them drawn up before Canton House on the occasion of Miss Lyneton's last visit.

And Gwendoline received him with the pleasant courtesy due to any guest of her brother's, but more especially to one whom he had known so long and esteemed so highly. A soldier, too, who had served his country well in many years of foreign toil, and would serve it still, not withholding life itself, if that were needful. And to have heard the cheerful flow of talk that evening in the oriel-room of the old home at Lyneton Abbots,—how Jeanie brought up one after another the childish memories of six years ago, the games of hide-and-seek among the laurel-bushes, the stories, told with such patience, listened to with such eagerness beside the fountain in that sheltered corner of the garden, the splendid swings Maurice used to give her when old Grey was too busy,—no one would have thought that any sadder life lay beneath this, or that those long-ago days over which the young girl's laugh sparkled so merrily, could lead to other less happy memories for any of them.

And if, as the gloom of evening fell, and the flickering fire-light cast long shadows upon the pictured walls, Maurice Demeron turned again and yet again toward Gwendoline, where she sat apart by the oriel-window, changed, yet still the same, with almost her olden girlish sweetness given back again, but worn now beneath a crown of womanly calm and dignity; and if, as he looked at her, giving by her very presence an air of peace and purity to the home whose happiness she guarded, he thought of Rose Beresford, winning bright smiles and admiring glances beneath the chandeliers of Dublin drawing-rooms, and found the new love not so fair as once it seemed, such thoughts came too late to deepen into regrets; he must even abide by the lot which he had chosen for his own. Was he not a very happy man, prosperous, honorable, well esteemed? And was not his bride-elect a model of elegance and beauty, and was not every one wishing him joy of the happy future? A future which was to be brightened by Rose's smile, the sweetest, most beautiful smile he had ever seen?

Why, then, was he not content in this, his so great happiness? How was it that at night, long after they had parted with courteous farewell, Maurice Demeron kept pacing that balustraded terrace over which the moonlight was creeping now in many a silver streak? And why did he linger, sad at heart, under the stone gate-way, recalling a past which was indeed quite past, now? And why did he look up so often, and so wistfully, to that dormer-window, through which the light of Gwendoline's lamp glimmered among the ivy-leaves? Would he indeed have gone back to the old life, if he could? Did these long-ago days seem to him now like precious jewels which careless hands have dropped, shining far down on some deep ocean floor, more precious because they can never be reached again?

Poor Maurice Demeron! pacing that mossy terrace in the October moonlight, mourning over the brightness of a lost love, which, when it was all his own, did not seem so very bright. He almost wished now that he had never come again to Lyneton Abbots, and seen Gwendoline wearing that gentle, peaceful look which he remembered so well when first they belonged to each other. He would rather have gone away back to India, carrying with him the recollection of her as they last parted after his visit in March, so coldly courteous, so very calm and reserved. For six months he had been trying to persuade himself that he had not put away from him such an exceeding precious treasure when he turned from a love so constrained to Rose Beresford's, bright, glowing, sparkling. He thought he had quite succeeded. When he wrote to Mr. Lyneton, arranging to come over for a day's shooting, he felt sure he could meet Gwendoline without a

single regret, or even the slightest tinge of uncomfortableness, except for the little cloud which rested on his own honor, and which after all might only be because he was oversensitive in these matters. But now that he had seen her again, the past had all come back upon him. Too late, he learned what life might have been for him.

Yet was it indeed too late? Was there then no recalling of the old content? Might he not even yet plunge into the deep waters and recover his lost jewel which he had let fall from his careless hand so long, long ago, and which shone now so brightly far down below his reach on the wreck-strewn ocean floor?

That night Gwendoline Lyneton dreamed of a little child, a babe in shining white raiment, which some one laid in her arms, bidding her tend it carefully. She had had that dream once before, a long time ago, the night that Jeanie's mother died.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE next morning promised well for a splendid day. There was a gray mist over the woods which, when the sun rose, cleared away, curling into many a fantastic cloud as it gradually floated up the hill-side. And there was that little touch of frostiness in the air which comes with early October days, just enough for glow and freshness, yet not bringing too keen a reminder of winter's biting cold. There had never been a more glorious day for a shooting-party, Mr. Lyneton said, since he and Maurice Demeron and Mr. Lucombe had set off, six years ago, for their last raid among the hares and partridges, the autumn before young Demeron went out to India.

Mr. Lucombe was to join them again this time, returning to dinner at the Manor House in the evening, an arrangement which caused the doctor's lady great inward exultation. For the Lyneton Abbots people were generally so very exclusive, never inviting even the most select of the village people, except the clergyman and his sister, to meet any of their aristocratic friends. They only just asked them once a year, or perhaps not so often, to a formal dinner among themselves, which though pleasant enough in its way—for both Mr. Lyneton and his sister, notwithstanding their reserved manners, were exceedingly courteous, and did every thing in a most finished style—was not nearly so satisfactory as meeting the county families, or people of that sort. It seemed almost like a tacit acknowledgment that they were not considered equal to the Lyneton's own set, insomuch that had it not been for injuring her husband's professional interests, Mrs. Lucombe could have found it in her heart quite to decline the hospitalities of the Manor House. But since Major Demeron, *by virtue of his birth* and position, and *the intimate relation in* which she was quite sure he would one day stand to the family, might be considered as belonging to the Lynetons' own set, the doctor's lady felt proud of the honor put upon her husband, and did not fail to inform her friends, especially Mrs. Jacques, who had not even a calling acquaintance at the Manor House, that Mr. Lucombe was engaged to dine with the Major, after accompanying him in a sporting excursion over the moors.

Only she hoped dear James would be careful not to go too near Major Demeron when his gun was loaded. That was the only thing that gave her any anxiety. The Major used to be so exceedingly rash with his gun when a young man, tossing it about, as James himself remarked, just as if it had been a walking-stick, or something of that sort, with no regard whatever to the barrels being loaded. And most likely, after being so many years in India, where, on account of the wild beasts, people were called upon to be more daring and adventurous, he would go to even greater lengths than ever with his carelessness. She did hope, then, dear James would be careful, and not expose himself to needless danger, or she should be in agony the whole time they were away, she should indeed. Guns were such frightful things. She knew it was very foolish of her, but she felt ready to faint whenever James brought his into her sight, and she did not believe, if it had been to save her life, she dare have taken hold of it, or carried it away for him. She always expected it would burst, or something dreadful would happen. Because one heard of such shocking things sometimes. One scarcely ever took up a paper during the shooting season without reading of some terrible accident, just through carelessness.

And she hoped, too, that James would take particular notice, when the family were all assembled, how Major Demeron conducted himself toward Miss Lyneton. She, Mrs. Lucombe, felt fully persuaded in her own mind that there was an understanding in that quarter. There had been one, she believed, even before the Major went out five years ago; though she would not take upon herself to say that it had ever amounted to a formal engagement, he being so very young then, and his prospects not sufficiently established to warrant any thing definite. She remembered, as well as if it were but yesterday, how he used to fix his eyes upon her in church, when the clergyman was reading the lessons, and how he used to be continually seen with her in the garden, or sauntering about through the Lyneton woods; which he had no right to do, unless he had serious intentions, and she could not believe it of any one, still less an English officer, that he would ever draw back from a thing of that kind. And that he had not drawn back from it was abundantly evident from his continuing to visit at the Manor House as he did; because, of course, it was the very last house he would think of going to, if a change had taken place in his views.

Mrs. Lucombe told her husband, too, while she was looking out his shooting-coat and game-

bag, and getting his evening suit ready for him to put on when he came from the moors after their day's sport, that she was so fully convinced in her own mind that there really would be a wedding at Lyneton Abbots before long, that she had ventured a pair of gloves on it against Mrs. Jacques, and she should feel so triumphant if she got them. Mrs. Jacques said it was Miss Beresford that the Major was thinking of. Miss Beresford was just one of those elegant, fascinating girls that men can not stand against; but she would not admit any thing of the sort until she saw them with her own eyes, standing up before the altar, which she was quite sure she never should do; and Mrs. Jacques ought to be ashamed of herself, happy and prosperous wife as she was, to have no better opinion than that of any man, especially a soldier and a gentleman like Major Demeron. And so dear James was to be sure and take particular notice whenever he had the opportunity, and bring her word again how the case really stood.

Which James promised faithfully he would do; and being a man of some discernment in such matters, his judgment might be depended on. For his own part, he thought his wife might safely reckon upon the gloves, and he told her so, as he packed up his gun, and stowed away his powder-flask, and donned his shooting-costume, in readiness for the day's sport. For he, too, remembered the young officer's visits five years ago, and had his own opinion about the results to which they might lead.

But there was no pleasant after-dinner chat that night at Lyneton Abbots, no gathering round the fire in the oriel-room to talk over the day's enjoyment, no triumphant emptying of game-bags in the flagged court-yard, and counting of spoils, while Gwendoline and Jeanie stood by, half sad to see so much dead beauty. Mrs. Lucombe, cautious little woman, was only too correct in her remembrance of the major's youthful carelessness. That shooting expedition, begun so brightly, was destined to a gloomy ending, an ending to be chronicled in newspaper paragraphs under the head of "Melancholy Accidents," and read with sighs and regrets at many a fireside, instead of being laid up among the pleasant memories of those who had taken part in it. At noon they brought Maurice Demeron home, cruelly wounded; wounded beyond hope of healing, as it proved. Wounded by his own deed, for, as Mrs. Lucombe said, he was indeed most rash and careless with his gun, and while using it to show his companions how some of the Indian jugglers performed their tricks, a barrel which he had left loaded discharged itself into his side. No more shooting excursions now for him, no more wild freaks and adventures in the jungles of Bombay, no more brave service either, or fighting across the seas. Nothing for him but a few hours, more or less, of suffering, *and then to die.*

They brought him back to Lyneton Abbots, *and laid him upon a bed in the* library, and *there all that tender skill could* do was done for him. Rose Beresford was far off, singing away the merry hours amid her gay Dublin friends. No need to summon her, for long ere she could reach him, he would have gone where no love of hers was needed any more. It was Gwendoline who tended him—Gwendoline who listened to his last faltering words, and smoothed his pillow in those few restless hours which yet remained to him.

Only few. Mr. Lucombe told them from the first that it was a very hopeless case. He was scarcely likely to live the night over. Perhaps an hour or two more would set him at rest forever from the pain which vexed him now. When the good doctor had done all that could be done, he went home to tell his wife the sad story, promising to come back to Lyneton Abbots soon; though no skill of his could be of any use now, except perhaps to make those last hours wear away with less of suffering.

Miss Lyneton, whose place in the house seemed to give her that right, watched alone by Maurice Demeron's side. He had come back to her, then, to die. There was a sad, proud pleasure now in the thought that she had always been true to him—that even when he had forgotten her she had remembered him, never thinking of him but with kindness; such kindness as we give to the dead, whom it seems so cruel to blame. She might give him that kindness always now, nor fear that she gave too much for other's right.

The October sunlight came brightly in through the mullioned window; golden sunlight flickering through the elm-tree boughs, from which now and then a yellow leaf fell so noiselessly and nestled among the autumn flowers beneath. And very warmly that sunlight rested on the stone gate-way, whose mouldering griffins kept watch and ward over the old house. Next time Maurice Demeron passed under them, he would see no grim, defiant look of theirs. Those quaint old faces would gaze down upon his living face no more.

He opened his eyes from a restless sleep, and turned them upon Gwendoline, who was sitting by him. It was an anxious, troubled look, not so much for pain of body as for that sadder pain of soul which will not be bidden down by any proud endurance. He had wronged her very much, and wronged himself also, in casting away from him the love which was so true. It was too late for any regrets now; too late for any thing but forgiveness. And, though she gave kindness, gave the tender care which suffering always wins from a woman, could she give that too?

He looked away, past the falling elm-tree leaves, to the old gate-way, then back to her again, searching, with what dim sight was left, the face which bent over him so gravely, yet with no rebuke in it for any ill that he had done. He must have read in it something more than pity or tenderness only, something which told him that he might come back and once more rest in that firm, abiding steadfastness of hers;

for, stretching out his feeble hand to her, he said—

"Has time, then, changed us so much, Greta?"

There was no need for pride nor silence now, no need to keep back any more the faithful love which had already borne so much. Gwendoline said, more steadily than she could have said it a few hours ago—

"I never change, Maurice; and I can not forget."

He tried to clasp her hand, but the poor weak fingers had no longer any strength in them. He could only lie still like a tired child, erring, forgiven, and at rest.

Mr. Lucombe came back, but only to tell them that the end was very near. While they watched him, his mind began to wander; a sure sign, the doctor said, that he was sinking fast. He muttered something about the regiment and the barracks; parade, duty; then he seemed to fancy himself in one of those great Indian cities which he had spoken of, with its vast temples and gorgeous procession, for they caught some whispered words about priests and robes, and Brahmins chanting their prayers before the idols.

Then there was a long silence. If a word or two broke it now and then, it was still about that Indian life. His thoughts were wandering there yet, and if he seldom spoke, it was only because his strength was failing so fast. Still they listened, to hear if there should be any message for distant friend, any charge he would give to be fulfilled after his death.

No; all was quiet now, until very gently he whispered—

"We can *trust* each other, Greta."

They were the last words he spoke. Mr. Lucombe heard them, though they were very low. Greta; it was a strange name, some Indian lady, most likely, who had won his heart out there in Bombay. No name, certainly, belonging to Lyneton Abbots. There had been some promise, then, poor fellow; and he would never go back to fulfill it. Greta; a foreign-sounding name, not unmusical, though. Mr. Lucombe might tell his wife that the bet was a drawn one; the major had some attachment abroad, and neither Miss Lyneton nor Rose Beresford would ever have won heart of his.

After that the worthy doctor went away again. There was no need for him to stay, he said. The most that any one could do for the wounded man now, was to watch for an hour or two, until all was over, until that weary tide of life had ebbed back again into the great sea of eternity.

So Gwendoline sat by him, in his sight; so near that his hand could touch hers, and his dim eyes seek her own, so long as the light of a living soul trembled within them. There was no fear now, nor questioning in that look; rather the quiet confidence of the little child, *who, having been forgiven some great wrong, looks up trustfully into the face* whose grave rebuke no longer saddens it. And even as that little child, wandering, suffering, comes home at last to the love which never fails, so this poor human heart, frail yet gentle, returned to touch with its latest throb hers who was ever faithful, even unto the end.

Toward sundown, when the shadow of St. Hilda's Church was creeping up over the old house at Lyneton Abbots, Maurice Demeron died.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE great town of Oresbridge still pours out its tide of wealth over all the country round. From its dye works, and chemical works, and sulphur works, and iron works, from its huge manufactories and warehouses, its foundries, mines and furnaces, the cry of human toil goes up to the heavens; and if labor be indeed worship, there is no place more thronged with devotees than the million-peopled town which school-boys learn of in their geographies as the "great centre of the iron district of England."

Year by year the splendid houses thicken round it, and fresh warehouses are built, and taller chimneys reach up their black fingers through the murky air, and larger furnaces shoot out livid tongues of flame, lighting up the evening sky with such an angry glow. And in those dingy courts and cellars a more loathsome mass of dirt and vice is swept together, out of sight; only telling its fearful story sometimes when the noisome fever-taint creeps out from it to the splendid villa residences on the outskirts of the town, or some deed of foul wrong, hatched amid its festering corruption, startles British respectability into an unwonted outburst of righteous indignation.

Some of those pale-faced, hollow-eyed workmen who used to saunter down the Lyneton Abbots road, looking so longingly into cottage gardens where the rosy-cheeked children tumbled about among the long grass, saunter there still, during the holiday quiet of Sabbath afternoons. Others of them lie quietly under the sod, their tale of work done at last; having won, it may be, to the eternal Sabbath, from which no weary march of duty shall e'er recall. If not, God pity them! For they had but scant rest or joy here. Their places are soon filled up. There is no lack of human machinery in Oresbridge; for those great furnaces must be fed, and those huge clods of iron puddled and hammered and rolled, and those deep dark mines keep crying out for other children to toil in them; little children, whose faces they blanch, and whose eyes they dim, and out of whose young lives they crush all the joy and all the sweetness; for the work must be done, and the little children are born to do it.

Mrs. Mallinson's visions of social greatness have been realized to the utmost, for her husband does actually now envelop that square-built little person of his in the robes of supreme civic authority. He is, in fact, the mayor of Oresbridge,

and a very excellent little mayor too; very clever in rooting out abuses and getting them rectified; vigilant in administering justice to the thieves and drunkards and vagabonds who are brought up before him week after week, to receive the due reward of their evil deeds. A stirring little man, a very stirring little man, not a bit altered in that respect from the time when he inquired so pertinaciously into the evils and grievances of the old body, and hoisted the standard of rebellion, and succeeded in organizing such a triumphant split among the Park Street congregation.

The split is going on very prosperously, and holds up its head now as proudly as any of the denominations in Oresbridge. Mr. Barton has long ago ceased to supply its spiritual needs, and the Grosmont Road pulpit is occupied by a minister who keeps his practical enforcements judiciously in the background, and deals for the most part in the doctrinal expositions, which are more according to the views of the congregation. Of course the split could not exist without Mr. Mallinson. That is a fact expressed and understood every time "our respected chief magistrate" is called upon to take the chair, and support it with gold upon the plate, being a public occasion, as Mrs. Mallinson says; or to open the proceedings at its somewhat numerous tea-meetings, and other social opportunities. But still it is beginning to be self-supporting now, and it can pay its own minister and defray its own expenses, and even talks of building itself a larger chapel, of which "our worthy mayor" is to lay the foundation-stone during his year of office.

Mr. Mallinson does not reside at Canton House now. That has passed into other hands, and the ex-provision dealer and his lady occupy one of the most genteel and commodious family residences on the Lyneton Abbots road, where they support the cause as heretofore by liberal annual contributions, and have their reward in the shape of unlimited flattery and obsequious homage from the less prosperous members of the congregation.

Mrs. Mallinson does not like to be reminded of the time when she took in ball company, and had a gentleman for breakfast and tea; and she quite ignores the meal and flour shop, or, if compelled to refer to that phase of her existence, speaks of it as "the time when we resided at the Italian warehouse in the Grosmont Road." But if any one chances to mention the name of Mr. Barton, who is a professor now in one of the Dissenting colleges, she remembers him very well. He would never have risen to such an eminent position but for "me and my husband." It was "me and my husband" that brought him forward when he was a young man, and took him by the hand, and taught him how to preach so as to meet the views of thinking people; in fact, gave him that start in life to which he owes all his present success. Mrs. Mallinson quite appropriates Professor Barton as her own special and peculiar handiwork, looked at in a ministerial point of view.

And if, when the Grosmont Road preacher comes to have tea with them on a Saturday afternoon, he happens to speak of Hugh Deeping, the Editor of the ——*Review*, Mrs. Mallinson remembers that gentleman too, and has a little to say about him, touching the time when he used to officiate as clerk at the Bellona iron works.

"Father a minister, mother left a widow, poor thing! with not much to do upon. A very excellent young man, though, as me and my husband offered to take into the house because of its being a Christian home for him, and where his principles could be attended to. Quite one of the family, too, and always asked him down of an evening to join in with Sarah Matilda, when she was having a little music. Indeed,"—and here Mrs. Mallinson draws herself up, and looks complacent—"I shouldn't at all wonder if Sarah Matilda might have had him, only me and my husband thought she might do better for herself, and we've never seen no cause to repent as she settled with a party in the wholesale confectionery line, which is a vast deal better for making money than what the ministry is, as I always said the ministry was a poor thing for a young man to get himself on in the world with. There's nothing like business for laying by money, and making things comfortable against one gets into years."

And then Mrs. Mallinson sniffs as vigorously as ever, and throws herself back, not into a somewhat greasy-backed arm-chair, such as that which stood by the fire-place in the back parlor of Canton House, but into a very rich tabouret lounge, with walnut fittings, which, as she will most probably tell you, cost nine pounds ten shillings at one of the best furniture shops in Oresbridge.

Hugh Deeping, who is thus patronizingly dismissed by his former landlady, lives a secluded literary life in one of those pleasant little villages which dot the outskirts of London; near enough to look now and then upon its busy tide of life, far enough away to escape its noise, and din, and tumult.

He studied hard for two years in Germany, and then, having made for himself an honorable name among his fellow-students, and a fair reputation for learning and ability, came home to win such place as might be his due. He has won it now. People speak of him as one of the men of his time. Not a genius, or a profound philosopher, that Hugh Deeping could never be; but an earnest, thoughtful, hard-working man, a man who will leave the world better than he found it, a man who is helping to form the minds and mould the opinions of his fellow-men; not so much by any spoken words of his, as by his writings, and by that silent force of example, which is perhaps the most powerful influence any man can exert, the truest, loftiest form of work in this world.

But when Hugh thinks over all the steps which have led him up to this standing-place of his, he sees chiefest among them, not those early years of village leisure, nor the hard, close

study at Tübingen, wherein he gathered up such rich stores of knowledge, nor the companionship of great and noble minds, companionship so freely given to him now; but that real, hard-working life at Oresbridge, that year in which he toiled and suffered, and learned so much; in which he lived as a common man with common men; among them, yet not of them; that year in which he fell so deeply, yet rose again, and struggled on, conquering at last, as every man may who earnestly resolves to do it in a strength diviner than his own. That year gave Hugh Deeping his true hold upon life. It is from the knowledge he gained there, and not from college halls or library shelves, that he speaks so truly now. It is because he has himself toiled up the mountain-side, and knows its pitfalls and precipices, that he can reach out a brother's helping hand to those who are travelling the same road, and looking for the same resting-place.

And for something else than this wisdom learned of humiliation, and this patience born of suffering, Hugh Deeping blesses that spell of hard work at Oresbridge and Lyneton Abbots. If he was first taught there how bitter a thing life may be, he also felt with how much sweetness its cup may overflow. The deepest shadows and the brightest lights of memory lie side by side within that little year.

Jeanie does not often join her husband in those literary circles, where he receives so warm a welcome, and where she, too, for her noble, gentle bearing, and for that name of his, which she wears so proudly, would be very courteously entreated. She loves best the quiet of her own fireside. Nor can she, like some gifted and brilliant women, be his companion and helper in those works which are making his name famous. Much of his life is out of her reach. It is lived amid thoughts which she can only look at from a distance. But if she can not follow him into those tracks of close analysis and argument, from which he returns so often with aching head and clouded brow, she knows how to rest that aching head, and clear away the shadow from that brow; and so, with gentle, tender care, strengthen him for new toil. And if, on that great battle-field of life, where he fights so bravely with doubt, and error, and falsehood, there is no place for her, no weapon which her feeble arm can lift; if she can not stand by his side, and strive with him through the heat and fury of the conflict, she can gird on his armor ere he goes, and when the fight is over she can unbind it for him, and cheer him, so worn and weary, with her own brave, bright words of love and sympathy. Perhaps the people who are loudest in their praise of Hugh Deeping, his courage, his earnestness, his noble defense of the truth, little know how much they are indebted for all these to the quiet, simple-hearted woman whose name they never hear, who lives on so peacefully there in the shelter of her *own home, caring only how she may make that a sure resting-place for him.* They see the light shining from afar clearly and steadily, but they do not guess what little hand pours oil into the lamp, and keeps it always trimmed.

Hugh Deeping does, though.

If Jeanie has not much taste for inductive philosophy and abstruse theories of politics, she loves those evening readings as dearly as ever, when the long day's toil is over, and Hugh exchanges his heavy folios and books of reference for some lighter story or pleasant old ballad which she listens to as they sit together by his study fireside. Very often they fix upon "Percy's Reliques," and the book always opens at the romance of the "Nut-browne Mayde." Hugh reads it with a voice that has lost none of its old sweetness and power; which falters sometimes, even yet, over that story of true-hearted devotion, so simply told, yet so touching in its simplicity.

Jeanie's eyelids fall; her thoughts wander far away. She sees once more the oriel-room in the old home at Lyneton Abbots—the oriel-room with its faded portraits, its flickering fire-light gleaming over carved oak panels and quaint heraldic device on those picture frames; gleaming upon a silvery head—her father's head—long since laid beneath the chancel stones.

Looking up, Hugh Deeping's eyes are upon her, with a loving kindness deep and true as that which shone out from them in the young days of her girlhood.

There is not much more reading then.

CHAPTER LV.

THERE is an old house at Lyneton Abbots, fronting the village church, having but a grassy foot-road between its stone gate-way and those church-yard yew-trees upon whose black-cowled heads the snows of four centuries have fallen. So near the village church, that at early morning-time the dormer-windows of that chamber where for centuries past the heirs of Lyneton Abbots have drawn their first breath, casts its shadow upon the east front of the church, quite into the chancel, where those same heirs of Lyneton Abbots lie buried beneath canopies of carven stone. And toward evening, when the sun is low, that east front in its turn darkens the dormer-window of the old house; so that life and death, the cradle and the grave, seem ever meeting and mingling there.

Still the ivy winds its untrimmed garniture over the tall gables; still the lichens creep with many a stain of russet-brown and olive over those worn stone mouldings. Still Abbot Siward stands, grave-faced and silent as ever, over the old door-way through which so many a brave knight and lovely lady of the Lyneton race have been carried, with folded hands and shut eyelids, to their rest in the chancel of St. Hilda's Church. The warm October sunlight lingers lovingly as ever in the pleasant old-fashioned garden, touching into purple ripeness the grapes which cluster

so thickly on the vine by the south wall. And then it steals along those gray coping stones, past many a tangled cluster of hop and bind-weed, past beds of lavender and clove-pinks, past the old sun-dial with its moss-written legend, to the gate-way opposite to the church-yard yew-trees, where the griffins leer down from their lichened pillars, grim and defiant as when, hundreds of years ago, they first mounted guard over the old house. But when the October sun has faded away from all these, it still looks in with slant, golden ray through the mullioned window of the library, giving its last gleam of light to the room where Hugh and Jeanie had their first meeting, and where Maurice Demeron died.

Over all the place there rests, as heretofore, an air of autumn-like mellowness and decay. Its glory is departed, its best days are in the past. Its beauty is the beauty of an aged face, over which the grave must ere long close. And yet the spirit of the old time lingers round it still, and memories of by-gone nobleness cling to it—memories of the love and hope and joy of the people who have been born and died there, the men who fought so bravely and lived so purely, and died so fearlessly; the women who loved so truly and trusted so faithfully. And while the memory of these remains, there will ever be a sacredness and a beauty which no time nor change, no mould of age nor autumn of decay, can take away from the old home of Lyneton Abbots.

Gwendoline Lyneton lives there still; a quiet, contented woman; gravely remembering the past, reverently doing from day to day the work which God has given her to do, patiently looking onward to the golden future not far off. She and Maurice Demeron can trust each other now; and when the sweet call of Death bids them meet again, these long years will seem to her but a few days, for the love which she had to him.

THE END.